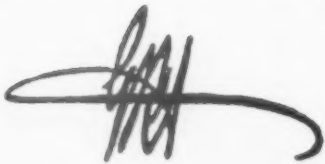


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# THE SHAW REVIEW

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# THE SHAW REVIEW

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Vol. IV, No. 1

January, 1961

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*When I contemplate what I know and  
have done (not that I ever do) I have  
a high opinion of myself. When I con-  
template what I don't know and can-  
not do (which I am often forced to do)  
I feel as a worm might if it knew how  
big the world is.*

— Shaw, in  
*Everybody's Political What's What*

# Translating Drama: a *Saturday Review* Debate

by Max Beerbohm, Aylmer Maude and Bernard Shaw

*[Late in 1904, Max Beerbohm, Shaw's successor as Saturday Review drama critic, penned a review<sup>1</sup> of Tolstoy's The Power of Darkness which, on closer inspection, turned out to be a blast at the translator, and at certain theories of dramatic translation the Aylmer Maude version apparently failed to uphold. The claims of verbal fidelity and idiomatic fidelity were invoked in a serious analysis lightened only here and there by Max's familiar airy grace. But the matter was not to end there, as the translator submitted a pained protest for the letters columns of the next issue — a protest duly printed over Max's reply. The next week the battle was joined in earnest by the most regular reader of the dramatic columns in the Review, Bernard Shaw, and warfare on the subject of dramatic translation raged through the month of January.]*

*Culled from the yellowing pages and placed together in sequence, the epistolary debate appears to have interest beyond the original controversy, as it ranges over problems for which the practicing translator of drama has not yet found satisfactory answers.]*

## THE STAGE SOCIETY.

Last year the Stage Society opened its season with Maxim Gorki's play, "The Lower Depths." This year it chose "The Power of Darkness", Tolstoi's play. Between the two works there is a superficial resemblance. The theme of each is the degradation of the lower classes in Russia; and each is full of hideous and revolting details. So that the critics, for the most part, have been as much shocked by the production as they were by the first, and have rebuked the Stage Society as frantically now as then. But really the two plays lie on two very different planes. Gorki's play offended me, and the production of it seemed to me a mistake, because it consisted of nothing but its hideous and revolting details. There was no form, no meaning in the thing; and therefore no excuse for it — no effect from it except the effect of purely physical disgust. Tolstoi is different from Gorki in that he is a thinker, and an artist — has something to express, and knows how to express it. To the simple soul of Gorki, and to those simple souls who take an interest in Gorki, a farrago of ugly facts is an end in itself. To Tolstoi this farrago is a means to an end — is but the raw material for a finished product. Gorki snap-shots his wastrels, and, having shuffled the snap-shots together, offers the result as a play. Tolstoi, on the other hand, creates his wastrels, implants souls in them, and sets them moving in the possession of flesh and blood. He sets them, too, in significant relation to one another. They act and react on one another, and are developed from point to point by conflict. That their souls are hardly human, and that their progress is mostly in a circle, is necessary for fidelity to the theme. The characters are alive, and they move, moving in accordance to a set scheme; and thus is fulfilled the main requirement of dramatic art. In the end, the whole play is seen to have been the expression of a fine moral idea. Thus, through our ethical sense, as well as through our aesthetic sense, we are compensated for the hideousness of Tolstoi's material. We have no excuse for being disgusted by it. If we were disgusted during the course of the play, our sense for art has been imperfectly developed; for no art could be finer than Tolstoi's in the presentment of human character; and a proper pleasure in art is a thing quite uninfluenced by art's subject-matter. If we are not uplifted by the final scene, we have yet to develop

<sup>1</sup> Not one of those later reprinted in *Around Theatres* (1924 and 1930).



the rudiments of a moral sense. The Stage Society need not feel at all ashamed of having produced the play. Not they, but the angry critics, should be blushing.

For a critic disgusted by a play's subject-matter, it seems to me a rather strange proceeding to describe this subject-matter in great detail and let his description be printed in order that the public, too, may sicken. Yet that is how the majority of the critics proceeded after the performance of "The Power of Darkness." I am in one way less squeamish than they, but more squeamish in another. By the force of its characterisation, and by the rude skill of its construction, and by the fineness of its purpose, "The Power of Darkness" was saved from physically upsetting me. On the other hand, I would rather not set down in black and white a bare account of what the play is about — a bare account of the things that happen in it. That would be indeed a disgusting process for me, and the result would be not less disgusting for you. As it is impossible to show the fineness of the treatment without describing the subject-matter in detail, I fear I must ask you to take the fineness on trust, and to bear with me while I discuss a side-issue. A side-issue, but not an unimportant issue.

The characters in the play are very many, and not one is colourless or indefinite. But the chance that Tolstoi gave to the mimes was sadly minimised in passing through the hands of the translators — "Louise and Aylmer Maude." The mischief is done now, so far as "The Power of Darkness" is concerned. But, as the two mischief-makers are, I believe, habitual translators, through whose hands other foreign plays are likely to pass, it may be useful to give them a few hints as to how translation ought to be done, and to wean them from their present mastery of how not to do it. The translator should work ever with this ideal: to use just such words as the original author would have used if he were the translator's compatriot. I do not know the Russian language; but let me assume, for sake of argument, that Tolstoi does (as he is reputed to) make his characters talk naturally, like human beings. The primary aim, then, of Tolstoi's translator, should be to preserve in the dialogue this quality of natural and lively speech. How is this to be achieved? The translators of "The Power of Darkness" would say that this aim is to be achieved only by closest verbal fidelity to Tolstoi's text. The theory is specious. But it ignores the simple fact that Russian idiom is a very different thing from English idiom. And in practice the theory cuts a very painful figure — especially in practice on the stage, where the words have to pass through the lips of live persons trying to behave like live persons. For a dead language must ever result from the translator's grim fidelity to the text. Nay! "dead language" is too dignified a term to apply to such miserable jargon as was wrestled with by the mimes in "The Power of Darkness." We need not the letter, but the spirit, of the original. Give us the letter, and we can but make faint, convulsive grasps at the fugient spirit. Of course, the two translators have not made a verbatim translation of Tolstoi's words. I do not accuse them of that. They are guilty of a worse thing — guilty of the fatal endeavour to find some racy equivalent for every phrase. Russian peasants talk, of course, a dialect that is full of homely slang. So do our peasants. But all illusion of reality flies away when Russian peasants on the stage talk the lingo of English peasants off the stage. Quicklier still flies illusion away when Russian peasants use the vernacular of the Old Kent Road. And not further than the Old Kent Road have fared the translators of "The Power of Darkness" in their pathetic quest for equivalents. "S'elp me," cries a Russian peasant girl, and down on her head descends the shadow of a huge feathered hat. "My word!" ejaculates a moujik, and is covered with phantom "pearlies." "That's flat!" and kindred phrases are bandied from lip to lip till the very back-cloth takes on the semblance of the Old Kent Road. Perhaps I wronged the translators in saying that they had confined themselves to that thoroughfare. "It's a cute thing" seems to show that they went so far as the Bowery. Anyhow, they have managed to obliterate every touch of the local colour which they were piously trying to preserve. In future, let them not attempt to reproduce one kind of slang by another kind of slang. Let experience save them, in future, from a mistake from which instinct ought to have saved them

at the outset. To suggest the uncouthness of a foreign peasant's speech, a translator must eschew slang, which immediately switches the reader or hearer off to the slang's own locality. This unfortunate reportation is not effected by the use of ordinary, unremarkable English. Of course, there must be no long words, and no literary refinements. Let the Russian peasant speak more or less like an English child, with a plain Saxon vocabulary. Then we shall be able to regard him as a Russian peasant. Our imaginations, in reading the translation, will not be trammelled. In seeing the translation performed on the stage, our imaginations will be helped by the uncouth utterance and bearing of the mimes. In case the present translators are not yet convinced of their folly, I ask them to imagine what would be the effect if the mimes, instead of merely speaking their lines gruffly, were to assume specific Cockney accents. The translators can imagine how fatal that would be — that which is precisely the thing done by themselves.

Not all the performers in "The Power of Darkness" had the right manner for Russian peasants. Miss Dolores Drummond, for example, though she had an admirable conception of her part, and managed her long speeches with a flexibility that would be impossible to an actress of the modern school, was throughout much too graceful in utterance and in gesture. Mr. Lyall Swete and Mr. O. B. Clarence, both of whom played important parts, had acquired exactly the right uncouthness. So, also, had Miss Italia Conti, on whom the main burden of the play rested, and who played her part without rehearsal, script in hand, yet rose full-high to every dramatic opportunity. A striking achievement, this, and possible only to a born actress.

Mr. Barrie's "Peter Pan" must have an article to itself.

MAX BEERBOHM.

[December 31, 1904, pp. 823-24]

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### THE TRANSLATING OF RUSSIAN

To the Editor of the SATURDAY REVIEW.

Great Baddow, Chelmsford, 1 January, 1905.

Sir, — Apropos Tolstoy's "Power of Darkness" (please let me spell his name as he spells it himself) a critic in your pages takes my wife and me severely to task for our method of translation, and is good enough to explain to "the two mischief-makers" how the thing ought to be done.

First, by way of proof that we have at least a right to be heard in our own defence, allow me to quote one Russian and one English witness:

Tolstoy writes: "Better translators both for knowledge of the two languages and for penetration into the very meaning of the matter translated could not be invented;" and A. B. Walkley wrote (of the first book I translated): "For my sins I have to peruse a good many translations in the course of a year. I have never come across anything so good in its way as Mr. Maude's version of Tolstoy." If, therefore, our translation of "The Power of Darkness" is not satisfactory, it is (one may presume) because the work presents some special difficulties — difficulties alluded to in the preface to our volume of Tolstoy's "Plays."

We had, indeed, got as far as your critic's advice carries one, before we began the work of translation. What could be more simple and easy than "the use of ordinary unremarkable English," "no long words," "let the Russian peasant speak more or less like an English child, with a plain Saxon vocabulary"? It was when we got to work, that the uselessness of such advice became apparent.

Instead of the monotonous "Russian peasant" who speaks "like an English child," we had to deal with live characters, each of whom has his or her own peculiar method of expression! One or two speak rather good Russian; old Akim can hardly find words to make himself intelligible; Nikita (who can read, and has met townsfolk when he worked on the railway) uses long words occasionally, and is a bit of a Mrs. Malaprop (though Mr. Swete, at the Stage Society's performance, preferred not to emphasise that feature). Some characters use much slang, others hardly any. Nan, living among people not careful of the truth, helps out nearly every assertion with a little oath by way of assurance that she is not telling a fib.

Now the course your critic so kindly commends to our notice would simply blur the distinction between the manner of speech of each of these very different people!

A plan we thought of trying: namely to take the slang of some one district — say Suffolk —, or of some one period — say Bunyan's — broke down, because it would have suggested associations quite foreign to the place and time of the play. Ultimately we had to face the fact that to render such a play quite satisfactorily is impossible. We had to invent a series of proverbs for old Matryona to use, and to make up an indefinite slang belonging to no one place or time.

Ours was not the first English translation of this play, and there is no obstacle to other people trying to do better than we have done with it; but let me in conclusion add a word of advice to your critic. The work of conscientious translation is arduous, it is little appreciated, and except in the case of new works, it generally has to be done at a pecuniary loss. When, therefore, people have devoted some years to the endeavour to carry out this difficult task, any critic who does not know the language in question (Russian in this instance), should hesitate before he reads them a public lecture, in an influential paper, suggesting that they have not mastered the a b c of their craft. Before he depreciates work that has been done, he should at least be capable of appreciating the difficulty of doing it. It is a case in which, truly, example is better than precept.

Yours truly,  
AYLMER MAUDE.

[And so Mr. Maude really did, for a while, entertain the notion of translating Toystoy (y, by all means) through terms of Suffolk, or of Bunyan! Delightful! Had Mr. Maude made this weird admission in the witness-box, I, as cross-examining counsel, would have promptly resumed my seat, with a bland "Thank you, Sir, I have no further questions to ask." As it is, having no jury to address later, I may as well labour the point (so utterly missed by Mr. Maude) that a translator's aim should be to preserve the spirit of the original. To preserve the letter is fatal to this end. Tolstoy's peasants talk naturally. Mr. Maude's talk a jargon which (at best) belongs, as he says, "to no one place or time." Nan's "little oaths" are, doubtless, natural as coming from a Russian child, speaking her own language. But to find exact English equivalents for them is to change utterly their "value." As for Mr. Maude's idea that slangless language cannot be variegated to suggest different types in different classes, that is too childish for discussion. That translation is no easy matter, as he touchingly complains, far be it from me to deny. Translation needs a keen tact in language, and needs that caution in language which comes from sense of humour. To be a decent translator is certainly difficult. My point is that Mr. Maude is not the man to cope with the difficulty. — MAX BEERBOHM.]

[January 7, 1905, p. 17]

## TRANSLATING TOLSTOY

To the Editor of the SATURDAY REVIEW.

Great Baddow, Chelmsford, 9 January, 1905.

Sir, — Had Max Beerbohm ever talked with Tambó or Túla peasants, I am not sure that he would be so shocked at the bare suggestion of reproducing their speech in the seventeenth-century English of Bunyan's common people. I suspect that "the Russian peasant" of Mr. Beerbohm's imagination bears little resemblance to the real article.

He "assumes," for instance, that the characters in "The Power of Darkness" must have a "quality of . . . lively speech," — but this is a dangerous assumption to make where such people as old Akim and Akoulina are concerned!

Again he is shocked that Nan says "S'elp me." But if Nan may not say "S'elp me" and "May I die" — what may she say instead? Even without being able to read the original, Mr. Beerbohm should understand that she must say something!

I quite agree that "a translator's aim should be to preserve the spirit of the original. To preserve the letter is (sometimes) fatal," — but our critic expressly acquits my wife and me of attempting to make "a verbatim translation," and when he abandons generalities, and offers us practical advice, that advice turns out to be inapplicable to the case in hand.

I am sorry our version of "The Power of Darkness" does not please Mr. Beerbohm; but one cannot please everybody, and had we satisfied him we might have had to forego the approval of those better equipped to understand the original.

Yours truly,

AYLMER MAUDE.

To the Editor of the SATURDAY REVIEW.

10 Adelphi Terrace, W. C.

Sir, — Max's article on "The Power of Darkness" was so conspicuously adequate in its treatment of one of those masterpieces which leave most of our critics of the theatre hopelessly beaten, that I hesitate to take any exception to it. But if its effect should be to discredit Mr. Aylmer Maude as a translator, Max had better have hung an average daily criticism round his neck and cast himself into the Serpentine.

I ask Max, as man to man, has he ever read any of the other translators' translations? Has he ever tried "Resurrection" in French, or "What is Art" in any language except the original Russian? I have; and though I cannot say that Mr. Aylmer Maude is the best Tolstoy translator now living, that is only because I cannot read the others, and have consequently no right to give my opinion about them. Translating Tolstoy is not a matter of pegging away with a dictionary: it is the labour of re-thinking Tolstoy's thought, and re-expressing it in English. Tolstoy himself has appealed to Europe to judge What is Art by Mr. Maude's translation, and not by the censored and mutilated Russian version. And nobody can possibly read it and suppose that Mr. Maude is not either a highly competent translator or else a man of original genius who is writing under the pseudonym of Leo Tolstoy.

Dramatic dialogue is, of course, a thing by itself. Here Max may disqualify Mr. Maude's judgment and his touch, though not, I submit, without such a decent apologetic remorse as he might crave for himself if some comprehensive literary labour of his happened to involve his performing a violin concerto in the presence of Mr. Runciman. Instead of which, I grieve to see that he has rather wantoned in Aylmericide. I do not defend Mr. Maude's dialogue against him:

in these columns Max is the judge. But it is due to Mr. Maude to say that certain bowdlerisations were made on the stage for which he was not responsible; and these, like most improvisations at rehearsal, were rather trite, and were in my opinion due to an underestimate of the tremendous power of the play, which would not only have carried far stronger expressions than the players permitted themselves to use, but actually seemed to demand them at several points.

But what I chiefly write this letter for is to challenge Max to give us a canon of translation for plays written in dialect, in slang, and, as in the part of Nikita in the play in question, in Malapropose. What is a translator to do? We have had Molière's "Festin de Pierre" in English, with the peasants talking broad *Zummerzetz*; and I confess I didn't like it. Mr. Aylmer Maude makes his Russian girls say "S'elp me;" and, again, I confess I like that as little as Max does. But what is Mr. Aylmer Maude to do? What would Max do? What would I do? I think I should make the Russian peasant speak good plain Cobbett English; but though that would spare Max a jar, there is no use pretending that it would represent the original. It would misrepresent it very grossly. I repeat my question: What wouldst thou do, O Max? Let us have a canon — two columns of it.

Yours truly,  
G. BERNARD SHAW

[January 14, 1905, pp. 47, 48]

#### DRAMATIC TRANSLATION

What happens "when an irresistible force meets an indestructible body"? I give it up. But I know what happens when an irresistible person makes an unreasonable request. Mr. Bernard Shaw, who is always irresistible, addressed to this REVIEW last week a letter in which he urged me to write "two columns" conveying "a canon of translation for plays written in slang and in dialect." Well, three weeks ago I gave my canon, and gave it in quite a long-winded way. But, since Mr. Shaw wants me to repeat myself in a still more long-winded way, I will see what can be done. After all, questions of dramatic translation really are rather important. And perhaps it is better to convince people about a thing than not to bore them about it. So I will try to provide one of those canons two columns long that on the outstretched finger of Time, &c.

Mr. Shaw says that though he, like me, would translate the slang and dialect of a Russian peasant into ordinary, unremarkable English, he would thereby be grossly misrepresenting Tolstoy. And he seems to regard the whole situation as desperate. That is what comes of being a confirmed idealist. Translation can never, of course, be a perfect vehicle. Something must always be lost in it. There must always be a compromise. But let us not wring our hands. Rather, let us try how hard a bargain we can drive with the Nature of Things.

Roughly, there are two methods of translating a play — the scientific way, and the aesthetic way. For the student in his library, let the author's text be rendered with all possible fidelity. Let exact equivalents be found for every phrase, so that the student at leisure shall be made privy to the author's every minutest meaning, and shall drink ever so deep at the well of ethnology, and shall be all the while deeply impressed by the piety and the ingenuity of the translator. But in the theatre we do not want to be constantly pulled up sharp by our admiration for the translator. We want to forget the translator's existence. We want even to forget the author's existence. What we want is merely the play: not ethnology, but humanity: human beings generically, not foreigners specifically. We want to be as nearly as possible in the position of such people as are compatriots of the author and saw the play acted in the original version. Now, assuming that Tolstoy's play has been acted in Russia, to the Russian people who saw it there was nothing extraordinary and remarkable in the utterances of the *dramatis personae*.



The Russian characters were using just the queer slang and dialect which Russian peasants use in real life, and which is familiar to all Russians. There would be nothing extraordinary and remarkable to us in hearing Russian characters talk ordinary and unremarkable English. The inherent incongruity would pass unnoticed. But, when these characters talk a lingo which we associate only with certain classes in English life, then their utterances take on a tyrannous importance, and, instead of merely grasping the significance of what they say, we are wondering all the while what they will say next. We are so preoccupied by the form that the spirit eludes us utterly. All that we are conscious of is the glaring incongruity of English language on the lips of Russian peasants. Of course, the translator's aim was to preserve local colour as much as possible — to give us a true impression of Russian peasants. But his means necessarily defeat his end. For in seeing the translation acted we do not say to ourselves "These are real Russian peasants," but "These, we must remember, are not English, but Russian peasants." When I said just now that we want in the theatre not ethnology, but humanity, I did not, of course, mean that we want to imagine the foreign characters not to be foreigners. I meant that we want to be able to take their foreignness as a matter of course, and so to go straight to our comprehension of them as human beings. The translator who enables us to do that is really the most faithful translator, for he puts us as nearly as possible into the position of a native audience. Of course, his task is the easier when the original language can be faithfully translated into usual English. His real difficulty is when usual English has to be found for original oddities. But, by hook or crook, found that usual English must be.

Remember (I have not forgotten) that I am dogmatising only about translations for the theatre. It is interesting and valuable, for the student, to learn that a foreign peasant will, to express a particular meaning, use some form of speech for which there is, in English, a very near equivalent. But the translator for the theatre has to ask himself "Would an English peasant, to express that particular meaning, use this very near equivalent form of speech?" He has to distinguish carefully between practical equivalents and equivalents that are merely verbal. To explain the difference between these two kinds, let me take the case of "S'elp me," which has been so much bandied between Mr. Maude, Mr. Shaw and myself. "Nan," says Mr. Maude, referring to the child in whose lips the phrase was placed, "living among people not careful of the truth, helps out nearly every assertion with a little oath by way of assurance that she is not telling a fib." I have no doubt that little Russian girls do often swear under the slightest provocation. Nor have I any doubt that "S'elp me" is a near translation of one of their favourite oaths. But little English-speaking girls are not in the habit of swearing; and so the translation, though verbally near, is practically far. "S'elp me" or any other oath would be uttered by a little English-speaking girl only under extreme provocation. When Nan utters it on the English stage, it sounds ugly and has at once a violent significance, very different from its original significance. I have been challenged to say what she ought to say "since she must say something." Nor have I any diffidence in replying. The matter is quite simple. To get my reply, I have merely to ask myself "What would Nan, being herself, and being placed in those circumstances, have said, to convey that same meaning, if her language had happened to be English instead of Russian?" Of course she would have merely said "I promise you," or "Really and truly." Either of these phrases would give to an English audience the exact nuance that was given to a Russian audience by the native equivalent for "S'elp me." Something would be lost to us, doubtless. An ethnological detail would be lost. But, s'elp me, I would barter that gladly for the dramatic truth.

The duty of a translator for the theatre is very much akin to the duty of an oral interpreter. When two men meet, each ignorant of the other's language, it is the interpreter's business to make them understand each other as fellow-men, not to proclaim the exact width of the gulf that separates them as foreigners. The difference between the uses of two languages is not less than the difference

between the languages themselves. Therefore interpretation must, if it is to be effectual, be broad and free. I forget whether Mr. Shaw speaks Arabic, and I do not know whether he numbers any Arab chiefs among his friends. But let us assume that he does. And let us suppose that one of these Arab chiefs came to stay with him in London, and were brought by him one day to see me. I should say to the stranger "I am delighted to meet you." But this, literally translated, would be a grave affront. As I had meant well, Mr. Shaw, indicating me with a wave of the hand, would say in Arabic, "This, thy wretched cast-off slave, trembleth in his inmost fibres that thou shouldst have deigned to irradiate with the almost intolerable lustre of thy presence the grimy hovel in which he draggeth out his degraded existence." To which the Arab: "Nay, but assure him that in yonder mirror I behold myself reduced by the dimensions of his palace to something less than the size of a gnat, and that this is, alas! the last sight that ever will be vouchsafed to me, for that the glory of my host's person hath afflicted me with a sudden but incurable blindness." Whereupon Mr. Shaw (chafing a little): "He says that any friend of MINE is a friend of *his*." Now, if Mr. Shaw had not interpreted his friend at all freely, I should have been firstly embarrassed, secondly distressed. And if Mr. Shaw had not interpreted me, too, freely, I should have been run through the body with a scimitar (or whatever it is that an Arab chief carries). And suppose, further, that Mr. Shaw (fired by the example of translators who translate one dialect through another dialect) had reproduced for the Arab chief my own peculiarities of speech. I was born in London, and doubtless have an excruciating cockney accent. Suppose Mr. Shaw had, therefore, in repeating my words, spoken Arabic with an atrocious Meccan accent. Straightway the chief would have been mentally transported into the alleys of Mecca, and I should have seemed to him as utterly anomalous and unreal as seem to us Russian peasants speaking English dialect. As it was I seemed quite verisimilar to him. And, moreover, thanks to Mr. Shaw's admirable freedom in choice of words, each interlocutor was made to understand more or less what the other was driving at; and who knows but that this will be the basis of a life-long friendship?

A friendship under difficulties, of course. Something must be lost through even the best interpretation. Likewise, something must be lost through even the best translation of plays. English playgoers will never, for example, be so closely in touch with Tolstoy as they are, or soon will be, with the comparatively compatriotic Mr. Shaw. But we can (if my hints are taken) be brought into fairly close touch even with quite alien playwrights.

MAX BEERBOHM.

[January 21, 1905, pp. 76-77]

#### TRANSLATIONS OF TOLSTOY

To the Editor of the SATURDAY REVIEW.

Great Baddow, Chelmsford, 18 Jan., 1905.

Sir, — Mr. Bernard Shaw having patted us both so nicely on the back, and "Max" having buried his tomahawk (or reserved it for other scalps), I am free to admit, not that slang should never be used in translations, but that "there are two methods of translating a play," one for the library and the other for the stage.

My wife and I made a library version of "The Power of Darkness." The Stage Society used it, without asking us to modify it for the stage. I submit that the fact that it went as well as it did, with few rehearsals and in spite of a scratch lot of costumes and accessories, shows that, with some revision, our version would act very well. It would only be necessary to take certain liberties with the text, which we could not fairly have taken in an edition intended for the library.

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The real question the critics should put to each new adventurer in the wide field of Tolstoy translation is: "Are you helping or hindering the ultimate achievement to be aimed at: a version of Tolstoy which shall be true to the spirit of the original, and shall read not like a translation but like an original?" In so far as the publishers are merely money-grubbing they should be checked by the critics, or an unedifying scramble will continue indefinitely.

Yours truly,  
AYLMER MAUDE.

[January 28, 1905, pp. 110, 111]

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## FROM THE SHAVIAN PAST VI

*In about 1908, Marsh and Neville Lytton had called on the Shaws in Surrey at a time when the dramatist had just taken up amateur photography. He exhibited his snapshots with pride, and was expatiating on the merits of his machine when he happened to remark that the day might soon come when the Camera would supersede the art of Painting as effectually as the Typewriter had already supplanted poetry. This was an observation worthy of his genius as a provocateur, since the first clause succeeded in irritating Lytton and the second annoyed Marsh. In an unguarded moment Marsh casually put in that he did not think the like of Paradise Lost could ever be written by a typewriter. "Oh, Milton," growled Shaw in disgust, "that old hombog, that bag of tricks!" It was now no longer a joke. Marsh was thunder-struck, "not being of an age," as he afterward explained, "to sit down under blasphemy." Mrs. Shaw now tactfully intervened on the poet's behalf. "Surely, G.B.S.," she said, "some of Milton's prose is very good."*

*A few weeks after the [1934] controversy [over BBC pronunciation between Marsh and Shaw in the correspondence columns] in The Times Marsh was taking his seat in the theatre at the O'Casey first night of Within the Gates when he discovered that his neighbour was none other than Shaw. "Here's the bumptious novice!" he exclaimed, at the very moment when Shaw was saying the same thing, and in accordance with the custom whereby the two speakers of identical words link their little fingers and name a poet, "Milton!" cried Marsh defiantly. "La Fontaine," said Shaw graciously [Edward Marsh had published his new translation of La Fontaine's Fables in 1933], and they resumed their seats.*

— Christopher Hassall, in  
*Edward Marsh: Patron of the Arts*  
(New York and London, 1959), 581-82.



# Bernard Shaw and Adolf Hitler

by H. M. Geduld<sup>1</sup>

G.B.S. was, self-confessedly, a political failure according to his own standards. For more than half a century he waged a gigantic one-man propaganda campaign without visibly influencing the political opinions of his public. He had read Marx fourteen years before Lenin — but to what effect? In the Preface to *Back to Methuselah*, in his speech ("The Politics of Unpolitical Animals") to the Fabian Society in 1933, in his press conference at San Francisco in 1936, Shaw conceded that his solutions to the world's difficulties had never been accepted. Successful men molded public opinion, shaped the direction of history. Shaw admired such men, but he could not emulate their triumphs. He was merely their "school-master," their "commentator," and their "critic." "He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches," as Shaw wrote in *The Revolutionist's Handbook*. The aphorism is bitterly self-critical. When G.B.S. was offered a University Chair of Drama, he declined, saying that he was a practitioner, not a professor. But he knew that he could never have upheld a similar claim on the basis of his political career. "The successful man," he observed, "is one who has people doing what he wants them to do. But they're always doing what I don't want them to."<sup>2</sup> A deep sense of personal failure, of frustrating non-involvement is evident behind his mask of confident assertions that Soviet Russia was coming *Shaw's way*,<sup>3</sup> and that Stalin's Communism was the fulfilment of a *Fabian* program based on the Inevitability of Gradualness. As he remarked to the Fabian Society in 1932:

For forty-eight years I have been making public speeches and I have not produced the slightest effect. I have solved all the world's problems time and again and still they go on being insoluble.<sup>4</sup>

Fabianism had made little headway with the ill-fated and impotent Governments of Ramsay MacDonald, and in England, at least, the political influence of Shaw's own writings was negligible. An acute critic once observed how G.B.S. had cleverly sugared his ideological pill by his techniques of introducing politics into drama. But the public — even more cleverly — had licked off the sugar and ignored the pill. G.B.S. had triumphed as a jester and a man of letters, as a mahatma who seldom was taken seriously, but never as a politician and as an influential "world-betterer."

But if Shaw was a political failure, Adolf Hitler was, for at least a dozen years, a phenomenally successful man. The Fuehrer's rise to power had been a Triumph of the Will. It had taken him less than a decade to develop a few fanatics in a Munich beer cellar into a major political force. His *Mein Kampf* became, quite literally, a new German

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Geduld, Secretary of the Shaw Society (London), recently was a Fulbright Fellow at Indiana University.

<sup>2</sup> The New York Times, March 5, 1936, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Speech by Shaw at Balboa, in interview reported in New York Times, February 24, 1934, p. 11.

"Certainly I am a Socialist. Why shouldn't I be when the whole world is coming my way now?"

<sup>4</sup> The New York Times, November 25, 1932, p. 19.

bible, whereas Shaw's Pentateuch — *Back to Methuselah* (the "religion of the twentieth century") — fell on stony soil. Hitler's followers could be numbered in millions: Shaw's only in hundreds — if one excludes the many who have never been inclined to take his jests as earnest "in the womb of Time." We may look in vain for the Shavian spirit in a world without G.B.S., but we shall not have far to look for Hitlerism. The Fuehrer, though dead, is still with us, for the evil that he did lives after him. Shaw might well have cited Hitler's continuing posthumous success in verification of the opinion that he expressed in a lecture to the Fabian Society in 1933: "Hitler is a very remarkable man, a very able man."

This remark may puzzle readers who are aware of Shaw's fervent enthusiasm for Soviet Communism. Actually there is no contradiction, no deliberate paradox in Shaw's attitude. He admired Hitler and Stalin, just as he had admired Mussolini, because these men were trying to get something done and because they had all got rid of the "pseudo-democratic" party system — that "unparalleled engine for preventing anything being done." For G.B.S. dictatorship was "the only way in which government can accomplish anything." The party system would have to be eliminated if we really intended to solve our political problems.

\* \* \* \* \*

Shaw's account of Hitler's rise to power appeared after the Fuehrer's death, in the Preface to *Geneva*:

It happened that in Munich in 1930 [*sic*] there was a young man named Hitler who had served in the Four Years War. Having no special military talent he achieved no more as a soldier than the Iron Cross and the rank of corporal. He was poor and what we call no class, being a Bohemian with artistic tastes but neither training nor talent enough to succeed as an artist. . . . But he had a voice and could talk, and soon became a beer cellar orator who could hold his audience. He joined a cellar debating society . . . and thereby brought its numbers up to seven. His speeches soon attracted considerable reinforcements. . . . Much of what he spouted was true. . . . But he mixed the facts up with fancies such as . . . that the Jews are an accursed race who should be exterminated as such; that the Germans are a chosen race divinely destined to rule the world. . . . These delusions were highly flattering to Hans, Fritz, and Gretchen at large. . . . Like St. Peter on a famous earlier occasion the German people cried "Thou art the Christ." . . .<sup>5</sup>

Despite this later assured comprehension of the Fuehrer, at the outset Shaw was evidently doubtful about Hitler's unknown and possibly less praiseworthy objectives. At first he would express no opinion of Hitler. Apparently, following Asquith's advice, G.B.S. was going to wait and see. But he did not wait long. During his first visit to San Francisco, in 1933, he told a group of reporters that the Germans had decided to try Hitler just as America had decided to try F.D.R.<sup>6</sup>

In reply to questions about antisemitism in Germany he asked:

Why persecute the Jews or, on the other hand, why not? But then why not persecute the Americans or the Germans or the Swedes?<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Geneva* (Standard Edition, London, 1946), pp. 18-20.

<sup>6</sup> *The New York Times*, March 25, 1933, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

In April of the same year, Shaw told reporters in Balboa that in his opinion the "Jewish business in Germany is a disgrace and has destroyed any credit the Nazis might have had."<sup>8</sup> This indicated that the Nazis had "no real plan of action,"<sup>9</sup> and that they were attacking the Jews because they had nothing better to offer the German people. Shaw had already offered his advice to the Jews in the preceding year (before Hitler's rise to power) in an article in *The American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune*:

This craving for bouquets is a symptom of racial degeneration. The Jews are worse than my own people, the Irish, at it. Those Jews who still want to be the chosen people — chosen by the late Lord Balfour — can go to Palestine and stew in their own juice. The rest had better stop being Jews and start being human beings. The day of races and nations is over. . . . Do not accuse me of Jüdenschmerz: it is a more weakening disease than Jüdenheze. . . . You have asked for a shofar blast and now you have got it.<sup>10</sup>

Jews who warned their people against the threat of Nazi policies of genocide were insane pessimists. Shaw noticed that "extirpation of the Jew as such figured for a few mad moments in the program of the Nazi party in Germany"<sup>11</sup> but those "mad moments" had apparently passed when he published *On the Rocks* in 1934.

Later, during his visit to New York, Shaw expressed his disapproval of Hitler's anti-semitic policies merely to point out incidentally that America also was not free of persecution.

. . . . .

In his first few months of power, Hitler was hard at work setting up concentration camps on the outskirts of Berlin and consolidating his New Order on the ashes of the Reichstag. Shaw too was by no means idle. He sent a "peppery" postcard to the World Committee for Relief of the Victims of German Fascism, upbraiding them for interfering in the trial of those Communists who were accused of setting fire to the Reichstag building.<sup>12</sup> A few months later he declared that "one could not have expected a more apparently fair verdict"<sup>13</sup> in the Reichstag case. (It is unlikely that Van der Lubbe and his Communist "accomplices" shared Shaw's opinion.) Those who had concluded that the Nazis had been responsible for the fire and who had protested against the verdict before it was passed were now "in an extremely silly position." (How such simple faith must have gladdened the hearts of Karl Ernst and the S. A. thugs who had helped him to "pull off the Reichstag job" on behalf of the Fuehrer!).

Shaw now maintained that Hitler was "perfectly right"<sup>14</sup> in the international sphere, for the Fuehrer was determined to put an end to the "plundering" of Germany that had been legalized by the Versailles

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., April 4, 1933, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., April 4, 1933, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., September 30, 1932, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> *On the Rocks* (Standard Edition, London, 1934), p. 145.

<sup>12</sup> *The New York Times*, December 24, 1933, I, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., December 24, 1933, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., October 13, 1933, p. 15.

Treaty. Fabians who attended Shaw's lecture, "The Politics of Unpolitical Animals" (1933), were advised to look upon Hitler as a model and his Nazi movement as a laudable reaction against gross injustice:

The permanent expression on that face of Hitler is intense resentment. That is an expression every statesman ought to have. Our own statesmen look too pleased, too comfortable, too courteous in surroundings that should make them boil with rage. . . . Wouldn't you all 'be Nazis in England if a vicious treaty had been imposed on you by foreign powers, and if you had been told you could not carry a dagger but you would be allowed to carry a popgun?<sup>15</sup>

Shaw freely admitted that Hitler had certain shortcomings: he was a bad biologist and a worse ethnologist:

Instead of exterminating the Jews he should have said, "I will tolerate Jews to any extent as long as no Jew marries a Jewess." That is how he could build up a strong, solid German people.

However, Hitler's antisemitism continued to bother G.B.S. for many years. In *Geneva*, Shaw's Battler (Hitler) defends his treatment of the Jews by comparing it with the British exclusion of the Chinese from Australia and the American exclusion of the Japanese from California. Sometimes, as in *The Millionairess*, Shaw explained Hitler's antisemitism as a pathological craze. But he was more inclined to interpret it as a temporary political expedient that provided the Nazis with an "excuse for plundering raids and *coups d'état* against inconvenient Liberals or Marxists."<sup>16</sup> If G.B.S. was right, Dachau would become a holiday camp as soon as the Fuehrer had liquidated the Communists. It was apparently impossible for him to believe that the Jews were Hitler's scapegoats merely because they were Jews. G.B.S. gibed at Hitler's "non-Aryan" appearance: it was quite possible that the Fuehrer's "very mixed blood . . . got fortified in the past with that of King David."<sup>17</sup> He mocked at the results of Hitler's antisemitic policy:

Hitler has plundered the Jews and made it a crime to be a Jew in Germany. But he . . . has had to leave their jobs and their belongings to be owned and exploited by German employers who are sweating the German proletariat as rapaciously as any Jew. . . .

Here Shaw was not criticizing Hitler's antisemitism but his tolerance of Capitalism. The Fuehrer had learned nothing from Karl Marx. But, no matter: in due course the Russians would give him a few lessons.

In a notorious radio broadcast of 16th March 1935, Hitler announced that the Germans themselves would, henceforth, be responsible for the safety and security of the Third Reich. France had his solemn assurance that the Saar question had been settled. Germany would not "make or raise any further territorial claims on France." However, the Fuehrer felt compelled to point out that other States, including the "Jewish-Bolshevik" U.S.S.R., had rejected the idea of disarmament. Because of this, and in the sincere interest of German security, he was obliged to adopt a policy of re-armament. There was

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, November 24, 1933, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> *The Millionairess* (Standard Edition, London, 1936), p. 121.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

no need for alarm: the German people were not "seeking to establish a military hegemony in Europe."

Hitler's broadcast created sensational news in every European capital; but it did not disturb Shaw's equanimity. Before sailing for South Africa he announced that "It is nice to go for a holiday and know that Hitler has settled everything so well in Europe."<sup>18</sup> But, as Shaw was to observe many years later, the Fuehrer had also mastered the situation inside Germany. G.B.S. was presumably referring to the purge of the Roehm faction and the Night of the Long Knives when he pointed out that Hitler had massacred all his political rivals not only with impunity but with full parliamentary approval. As a result the Fuehrer

... found himself a born leader ... his whole stock-in-trade was a brazen voice and a doctrine made up of scraps of Socialism, mortal hatred of the Jews, and complete contempt for pseudo-democratic parliamentary democracy. ... Power and worship turned Hitler's head ... [he] became the mad Messiah.<sup>19</sup>

Undoubtedly Shaw thought that he had now arrived at an understanding of Hitler's character. But the monstrous original of Battler (in *Geneva*) was utterly beyond the comprehension of the satirical caricaturist who could create a Burge (Lloyd George) and a Lubin (Asquith). Battler is a rational thinker: his arguments have a certain validity and coherence that is lacking in the real Fuehrer's hysterically super-charged tirades. Battler is actually willing to give his opponents and critics a "sporting chance" — and to listen to their points of view:

JEW. I have been beaten and robbed. Is that the law of nations?

BATTLER. I am sorry. I cannot be everywhere; and all my agents are not angels. ... No Jew is ever satisfied. ... You have your warning. Keep away; and you will be neither beaten nor robbed. Keep away, I tell you. The world is wide enough for both of us. My country is not.<sup>20</sup>

As we shall see, Battler's apology ("I cannot be everywhere . . .") subsequently provides a background to Shaw's comments on the concentration camp atrocities.

There was little, if any, of Battler's "fair-mindedness" in the character of the real Fuehrer. Allan Bullock has described how Hitler was intolerant of discussion; "he showed no self-control in the face of contradictions or debate. He began to shout and shower abuse on his opponents, with an hysterical note in his voice."<sup>21</sup> This is not the description of a man who says, "I am sorry," and then goes on to justify his attitude. In fact, Battler does not succeed as a portrait of Hitler but rather as a "Literary Fiction" developed out of the character of Cain in *Back to Methuselah*.

In *Geneva* Shaw reached a dead end on the Jewish question. The Jew's protests are completely confounded by Battler; the antisemitic

<sup>18</sup> The New York Times, March 22, 1935, p. 21.

<sup>19</sup> *Geneva* (Standard Edition, London, 1946), pp. 19-20.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>21</sup> Allan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (Bantam Books, New York, 1958), pp. 13-14.



dictator is triumphant politically and forensically, and the Jews, even when the whole world is doomed to destruction, will, "with the business faculty peculiar to their race . . . profit by our despair."<sup>22</sup> No matter if Shaw could offer no further advice: Hitler would devise the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" for himself.

\* \* \* \* \*

G.B.S. was neither impressed nor disturbed at Hitler's European conquests. He knew that when the day of reckoning came, the crusading spirit of Soviet Communism would wipe Nazism from the face of earth. And he was probably the only Communist in Western Europe who was not thrown off balance — even temporarily — by the Russo-German pact of 1939. The pact was "joyful news." He explained in a letter to the *London Times* that "Herr Hitler is now under the powerful thumb of Stalin, whose interest in peace is overwhelming."<sup>23</sup> In a subsequent letter to the same paper, he clarified his opinion at greater length:

May I again point out that the news from Russia is good news for us as far as any war news can be called good?

. . . We have encouraged Poland to fight by our pledge to support her. . . . our support has entirely failed . . . leaving Poland a derelict to be picked up and put upon by Hitler as a shepherd "putteth on his garments."

At this point, we being helpless, Mr. Stalin steps in and says "not quite. If the Ukraine and White Russia are going begging Russia will occupy them, Hitler or no Hitler."

No sooner said than done. The Red Army is in occupation. Stalin . . . has no objection whatever to using Hitler as a catspaw. The unfortunate Fuehrer is compelled to disgorge his booty and face yet another army that is saying "thus far and no farther."

And instead of giving three cheers for Stalin we are shrieking that all is lost.<sup>24</sup>

It is not amiss here to notice that within two years the "unfortunate Fuehrer" who was supposed to go no farther was actually threatening Moscow.

But, in the meantime, Molotov echoed Shaw's words in a speech of 31st October 1939. He blamed the Allies for the outbreak of war with Germany, and then indicated that Russia was drawing closer to the Axis. G.B.S. was delighted at Molotov's pronouncement: "I cannot demur to a word of it," he said in a telegram to the *London Daily Worker*. The speech was "a very able statement of the situation from an honest government that has nothing to conceal."<sup>25</sup> Shortly afterwards, G.B.S. told a *Daily Mail* correspondent that the U.S.A. and the Western powers of Europe were responsible for the Russo-Finnish War. The U.S.S.R. was not merely justified in attacking Finland; it was *compelled* to do so for the security of the Soviet Union:

Finland has been led by a very foolish government. She should have accepted Russia's offer for readjustment of territory. She should

<sup>22</sup> *Geneva* (Standard Edition, London, 1946), p. 125.

<sup>23</sup> *The Times* (London), August 28, 1939, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, September 20, 1939, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> *The Daily Worker* (London), November 9, 1939, p. 1.

have been a sensible neighbour. . . . Russia believes that Finland thinks she has the backing of America and the Western powers.

No power can tolerate a frontier from which a city such as Lenin-grad could be shelled when she knows that a power on the other side of that frontier, however small and weak, maybe is being made, by a foolish government, to act in the interests of other powers menacing her security.<sup>26</sup>

When, at last, in June 1941, the Germans launched their offensive against Russia, G.B.S. was as jubilant as ever. An attack on the U.S.S.R. was bound to be suicidal — and it would reveal to the world the real strength of Soviet Communism. Any Marxist knew that a Socialist State had nothing to fear from the onslaughts of Capitalism or Fascism:

Only yesterday we and America were faced with the tremendous job of smashing Hitler — with Russia looking on smiling.

Today, owing to the inconceivable folly of Hitler, we've nothing to do but sit and smile while Stalin smashes Hitler. Now we'll see what will happen. Germany hasn't a dog's chance.

Either Hitler's a greater fool than I took him for or he's gone completely mad. Why people seemed to think Hitler could beat Russia I can't imagine.<sup>27</sup>

Later, in the Preface (1945) to *Geneva*, Shaw maintained that Hitler had at first been encouraged to attack Russia because of the "spineless attempts to appease him."<sup>28</sup> But the Fuehrer had also seen himself as a "crusader against Soviet Communism" and he was certain that the Capitalist West would join the Crusade. Unfortunately for Hitler, America and Britain were "too short-sighted and jealous to do anything so intelligent." The Capitalist West "shook hands with Stalin and stabbed Hitler in the back. . . . After twelve years of killing other people he had to kill himself, and leave his accomplices to be hanged."

By February 1944, Shaw was certain that Nazi rule in Germany was rapidly approaching its end. Hitler, "that rascal," would probably go into retirement either in the Royal Palace Hotel, Dublin, or in the Dublin vice-regal lodge "like Louis Napoleon in Chislehurst and the Kaiser in Doorn."<sup>29</sup> It was a "lot of rubbish" to talk about trying the Fuehrer and his followers as war criminals. "Just who are these spotless men that can act as judges?" But the Allies did not share this opinion. In due course, after the war had ended, judges were appointed, and they assembled at Nuremberg for the War Crimes Trials. To Shaw, these trials were closer to martyrdom than to justice. He was positive that there had been no calculated action behind the concentration camp atrocities — they were mainly due to bad management and inefficiency. "Battler" could not be everywhere, and some of his agents were not angels:

These Germans had to live in the camps with their prisoners. It must have been very uncomfortable and dangerous for them . . . [but they lacked] . . . eminent leadership, experience, and organizing talent [to] deal with such a situation. . . . Had there been efficient handling

<sup>26</sup> The New York Times, December 2, 1939, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., June 23, 1941, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Geneva* (Standard Edition, London, 1946), p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> The New York Times, May 19, 1945, p. 6.

of the situation by the authorities (assuming this to have been possible) none of these atrocities would have occurred.<sup>30</sup>

Goering, one of these "abused" authorities, sat through his trial and then committed suicide to evade the hangman. "Had the matter been in my hands," said G.B.S., "I should have supplied all the condemned men with a liberal supply of morphia tablets and given them every opportunity of sparing us the disgusting job of hanging them."<sup>31</sup> The uproar over Goering's suicide was absurd. "One would suppose that his evasion of the rope threatens us with a third world war."<sup>32</sup> When the Fuehrer's death was announced by radio, in 1945, Shaw had approved of the "correctness" of de Valera's action in sending condolences to Germany; but he was also convinced that Hitler's death had been due to his own folly "in making for Moscow instead of for Galway." However, the Fuehrer had been sensible enough to evade the ignominy of execution and his name would be immortalized triumphantly as a German "national hero."

\* \* \* \* \*

What are we to conclude from Shaw's comic-strip analysis of Hitler? Was G.B.S. pulling our legs, or can we assume that if he had lived out his natural life span of three hundred years, he might have taken his later politics and morality out of their watertight compartments? If Shaw was jesting, his joke was often in very bad taste. If he was serious, his attempts to rationalize the evil of the world's most criminal megalomaniac was doomed to failure from the outset. Indeed there is much in G.B.S.'s attitude toward Hitler that suggests the absurd observations of Pope:

The worst of madmen is a saint run mad.

Shaw's explanation of Belsen was an appalling error of judgment; but it would be equally deplorable to attempt to justify it as the natural outcome of fifty years of philo-Germanic Shavianism. Hitler's Germany was not the Germany that had "discovered" Shaw at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was not the Germany of Goethe — whom G.B.S. venerated — nor of Trebitsch, who had translated the Shavian gospel into German. Between Creative Evolution and Alfred Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century* is an unfathomable abyss of horror which Shaw was never able to comprehend. He was completely baffled by the implications of antisemitism; that is why he could offer no "solution" for it. And certainly he never grasped the political importance of racism in the Nazi ethos. He could understand the significance — even the "value" — of liquidating political adversaries, but he never realized that Nazi antisemitism could develop into a deliberate policy of genocide. The import of Hitler's words eluded him:

The art of leadership consists of consolidating the attention of the people against a single adversary and taking care that nothing will split up this attention. . . . The leader of genius must have the ability to make different opponents appear as if they belonged to one category.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Geneva (Standard Edition, London, 1946), p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> The Times (London), October 21, 1946, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, quoted from Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, p. 16.



G.B.S. was not being "fair-minded," paradoxical or wilfully shocking; he was not claiming the divine attribute of justice in trying to see virtue in evil men. In the 'thirties and 'forties he was very old and tired and the history of a bygone age was too much with him. He would not have claimed, in self-justification, that he was giving the devil his due, for his attitude towards Hitler was strongly influenced by pro-Soviet sympathies. But he also saw Hitler through the "injustices" of the Versailles Treaty,<sup>34</sup> and unfortunately saw no further. To repair an old injustice might have been a laudable aim of any German leaders; but actually to accomplish it at the price exacted by war and mass murder was disastrous. The ends do not always justify the means, and with dictators the means tend to supplant the original ends and to become ends in themselves.

However, Shaw's prophecies were usually more reliable than his politics. His comments on Hitler reveal that for the most part he had learned from history that he learned nothing from history. But there is more than a grain of truth in his final glance at the future distortion of the Fuehrer's reputation:

ROSE . . . Another set of them, called Jews or Israelites, tortured a young man to death for trying to persuade them that the divinity they worshipped was in themselves. . . .

HERM . . . His name was Hitler, poor chap!<sup>35</sup>

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### *Bernard Shaw and Adolf Hitler: a Footnote*

In William L. Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York and London, 1960), published after Mr. Geduld's essay was in its final form, appear two observations interesting for their picture of the Nazi misunderstanding of Shaw. In a review of life in the Third Reich, Mr. Shirer reports that "Strangely enough, some of Shaw's plays were permitted to be performed in Nazi Germany — perhaps because he poked fun at Englishmen and lampooned democracy and perhaps too because his wit and left-wing political views escaped the Nazi mind."<sup>1</sup>

If a planned invasion of England had succeeded, Mr. Shirer reveals, a Nazi "Special Search List, G. B. (*die Sonderfahndungsliste, G. B.*)," was to be put into immediate execution. The carelessly compiled document hurriedly put together in May, 1940, by Walter Schellenberg, one of Heinrich Himmler's bright young men then mainly occupied in Lisbon "on a bizarre mission to kidnap the Duke of Windsor," was later found among the Himmler papers:

It contains the names of some 2,300 prominent persons in Great Britain, not all of them English, whom the Gestapo thought it important to incarcerate at once. Churchill is there, naturally, along with members

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<sup>34</sup> See further *The New York Times*, October 13, 1933, p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> *Farfetched Fables* (Standard Edition, London, 1950), p. 119.

<sup>1</sup> P. 243.

of the cabinet and other well-known politicians of all parties. Leading editors, publishers and reporters, including two former *Times* correspondents in Berlin, Norman Ebbutt and Douglas Reed, whose dispatches had displeased the Nazis, are on the list. British authors claim special attention. Shaw's name is conspicuously absent, but H. G. Wells is there along with such writers as Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, Aldous Huxley, J. B. Priestley, Stephen Spender, C. P. Snow, Noel Coward, Rebecca West, Sir Philip Gibbs and Norman Angell. The scholars were not omitted either. Among them: Gilbert Murray, Bertrand Russell, Harold Laski, Beatrice Webb and J. B. S. Haldane.<sup>2</sup>

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## FROM THE SHAVIAN PAST VII

9 Landsowne Road, London, W. 11 / Dec. 13, 1926

Dear Lawrence,

*I have just come back from seeing "Mrs. Holroyd." It was a very good performance and Esmé Percy had produced it in the right way. Mrs. Holroyd herself was perfect, and Blackmore and the children and all the subsidiary characters, quite splendid. But the man who played Holroyd wasn't fine or big enough, I thought; not that touch of fire and physical splendour that I feel was the hidden ore in the body of him as you meant him perhaps. The atmosphere was right and you were in the play right through; only of course they couldn't talk the Derby vernacular. Bernard Shaw, who was there, said the dialogue was the most magnificent he had ever heard, and his own stuff was "The Barber of Fleet Street" in comparison! The actors loved the play; one felt that. The bulk of the audience? I can't tell. But anyway the audiences at these shows are mostly bloody.*

— Rolf Gardiner, in a letter to D. H. Lawrence about Lawrence's play, printed for the first time in Edward Nehls (ed.), *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography* (Madison, 1959), III, 121.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 783-84.

# Bernard Shaw's Contribution to the Wagner Controversy in England

by Janice Henson<sup>1</sup>

Bernard Shaw's career as a major music critic began professionally with the publication of his first review in *The Star* on May 18, 1888. To many of his friends this new occupation must have seemed a curious and doubtful undertaking. Although Shaw's youthful love of opera had driven him to learn to play the piano and acquire other informal training, he had no professional training as a musician. His mother — a disciple of G. J. Vandaleur Lee — gave singing lessons, and from her and Lee he learned the technique of voice production. His background was that of the amateur, and his setting up as a musical authority under the name "Corno di Bassetto" must have seemed an amusing conceit to his Fabian friends. But we know now that Shaw had begun to think about music criticism long before 1888. As early as 1876 (when he first arrived in London) he had been ghosting musical criticism in *The Hornet* for Lee, who had preceded Mrs. Shaw to London. In his first novel, *Immaturity* (1879), the barrister Mr. Musgrave discusses the faults and responsibilities of music critics. In particular he complains of their overbearing use of technical jargon, and exclaims:

I form my own opinion about music, and reason from what a performer is, instead of dragging a notion of what he ought to be out of a fog of tradition and reputation, and then being afraid to say he is anything else. That is what perfect criticism is, as far as such a rotten conceit as criticism can be perfect in this world.<sup>2</sup>

Such was Shaw's own point of view as a critic, and in such a spirit did he undertake his championship of Wagner.

Although it is generally agreed that Shaw's defense of Wagner was one of the more important aspects of his musical career, little has been written concerning the significance of his Wagnerism to the London musical public during his years for *The Star* and *The World*. On this question there have already been several hasty conclusions. Some commentators give Shaw credit for being one of the first in England to recognize Wagner's genius. It is not uncommon to read that "Shaw championed Wagner, who was then considered mad by critics and professors."<sup>3</sup> Shaw himself is misleading on this point. In the 1935 preface to *London Music*, the collection of his articles for *The Star*, he claims to have undertaken his defense when Wagner was "the furiously abused coming man of London." The history of the Wagner controversy in England shows how little Wagner was abused by the time of Corno di Bassetto.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Henson, a Shavian and a Wagnerite, did graduate work in both areas at the University of Chicago.

<sup>2</sup> *Immaturity* (New York, 1930), p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> Hesketh Pearson, *G.B.S. — A Full Length Portrait* (New York, 1950), p. 108.

In 1855, the hey day of anti-Wagnerian sentiment, Wagner came to London to conduct the Philharmonic for one season. The critical reception of his work at that time was stormy, slanderous, and unanimously denigrating. Two men in particular, Henry Chorley and James Davison, led the critical uprising. Offended by Wagner's anti-semitism and insulted by his politics, these critics declared it shameful that an exiled revolutionary should attempt to win the attention of a loyal English public. As the leaders of a nationalist movement in music, they disliked Wagner for being German, and claimed that the conductorship belonged to an Englishman. They considered him antipathetic to the best interests of English music. Chorley characterized him as a man "whose avowed and published creed is in contempt for all such music as the English love," referring thus to Wagner's criticism of Handel and Mendelssohn.<sup>4</sup>

However, between the years of Wagner's first and last appearances in London (1855 and 1877), his reputation had taken a decided turn for the better. In 1870 a performance of "L'Ollandese Dannati" (*The Flying Dutchman*) was held at Drury Lane. In the following year an English translation of *Lohengrin* appeared, along with Edward Dannreuther's articles in the *Monthly Musical Record*. Dannreuther, a German by birth and a musician by profession, was angered and annoyed by ludicrous translations of Wagner's prose works appearing in the *Musical World*. His articles for the *Monthly Musical Record* were devoted to a clarification of Wagner's views. He later published his own translations of some of Wagner's essays in 1873, 1880, and 1887. The first edition of Grove's *Dictionary* (1893) contains his major commentary on Wagner's life and art. Together with Lord Dysart, Dannreuther established a London Branch of the Wagner Society. Through the invitation of this group, Wagner came to London a second time — to conduct the Wagner Festival at Albert Hall.

The second pro-Wagner voice was that of Dr. Francis Hueffer, who contributed a series of articles to the *Fortnightly Review* which were published in 1874 under the title, *Richard Wagner and the Music of the Future*. This book was the first English commentary on Wagner's prose works after the German publication of the *Collected Works* in nine volumes. Hueffer followed his first book with *Musical Studies* (1880) and *Richard Wagner* (1881). There is a touch of poetic justice in the fact that following the Wagner Festival of 1877, Hueffer replaced James Davison as music critic for *The Times*.

The critics of the eighties were nurtured on the efforts of Dannreuther and Hueffer. Sir Hubert Parry, composer and critic, was Dannreuther's pupil and a convinced Wagnerite. He records hearing Wagner give a private reading of the poem *Parsifal* in 1877, an event which he found "extraordinarily dramatic." From references which are obviously eye-witness accounts, we know that Sir Henry Hadow and Bernard Shaw also attended the Festival concerts. Hadow mentions Wagner's "disquieting mannerisms," saying, "he used, for instance, to leave off beating when the orchestra was in smooth water." Shaw recalls seeing Wagner crowned with a laurel wreath at the close of the Festival.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Henry Chorley, *The Atheneum* (London, 1855), p. 120.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Henry Hadow, *Studies in Modern Music* (London, 1892), p. 293.

By 1888, the year of Shaw's debut, the musical scene was changing as well. Hans Richter had become conductor of the Philharmonic. Richter was not only Wagner's close associate, but also the chief conductor at Bayreuth during the last years of Wagner's life. The early operas were now part of the regular London season, and a complete performance of *The Nibelung's Ring* was heard in 1886. If anything other than Wagner's music itself is responsible for the ultimate critical recognition of his genius, it is certainly the work of Dannreuther and Hueffer, the pioneers of the early 1870's. Shaw acknowledged this himself in his article dated January 23, 1889, for *The Star*:

The unexpected death of Dr. Hueffer is a loss to the best interests of music in London. Fortunately, his warfare was accomplished before he fell. The critics who formerly opposed him on the ground that Wagner's music had no form and no melody, that it was noisy and wrong, and ought never to have been written, and could never be popular, came at last to be only too grateful to Hueffer for his willingness to forget their folly.

In less graceful prose Shaw had signalled the end of the Wagner controversy ten years before Dr. Hueffer's obituary. In 1879 he wrote, "We have settled that Beethoven could write music. We've even got as far as Schumann; and after some thirty years of knocking their heads against a stone wall, the critics are ratting as fast as they can to Wagner, to avoid being left too far behind."<sup>6</sup>

It seems likely that these contemporary references to the musical scene are more reliable than Shaw's memory of them in 1935. Nonetheless, we must add that, as a private person, Shaw was undoubtedly among the first of the generation which was to accept Wagner as easily as we now accept Stravinsky and manipulators of the "twelve tone row." His love of Wagner is reflected through the early novels, especially *Immaturity* and *Cashel Byron's Profession* (1882). Even before his sentiments found their way into writing, he confesses to have driven his mother nearly crazy with his favorite selections from *The Ring*, which she found "'all recitative' and horribly discordant at that."

Knowing, as we may assume he did, that he was not among the first to champion Wagner, what did Shaw think was the significance of his contribution to the Wagner controversy? From the musical columns and *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1898), it seems clear that Shaw intended his work as a defense and interpretation of the Wagnerian spirit. Shaw's qualifications for preaching Wagnerism to the modern world were based upon his knowledge of the views, musical and extra-musical, which he shared with the Wagner of 1840-1855. Foremost among these was their mutual conviction of the principles of socialism. Although Shaw did not believe in the need for violent revolution, he often referred with pride to Wagner's participation in the Dresden uprising of 1848-1849. In the 1850's Wagner drew up a plan for the art work of the future based upon the teachings of Proudhon as explained to him by his friend the anarchist, August Roeckel. So also Shaw considered himself a "combatant anarchist" in the arts, and a revolutionary in all phases of life.

<sup>6</sup> *Immaturity*, p. 161.

As Shaw well knew, his life and Wagner's bore many similarities. Their formal education had been piecemeal, and the negative influence of schools had led both men to a contemptuous view of the academic mind. Neither man was formally trained in his profession; Wagner studied composition only six months; Shaw wrote five pages a day until he was a practiced but untutored author. The calling of neither was clear or early. Wagner often remarked that his greatest period began after he was thirty-five years old, the age at which Mozart was already dead. In the meantime he tried his hand at poetry, philosophy, pamphleteering, and conducting. Shaw wrote Fabian tracts, novels, art, music, and drama criticism before his reputation was established as a playwright. Both men were fundamentally dramatists, and, curiously, both were vegetarians.

Finally, Shaw considered himself a superior Wagnerite because, paradoxically, he knew and enjoyed the work of other composers.

I had the advantage of knowing the music to which Wagner grew up, whereas many of the most fanatical Wagnerites (Ashton Ellis, who translated the Master's prose works, was a conspicuous example) knew no other music than Wagner's, and believed that the music of Donizetti and Meyerbeer had no dramatic quality whatsoever.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, he assumed the role of educating not only the public at large, but other Wagnerites as well.

Shaw's early musical columns are full of the sense of his *expertise*. When he complained that the Philharmonic programs lacked sufficient rehearsals, he never failed to mention that this complaint was Wagner's in 1855. He berated Augustus Harris because the operas were performed more often as orchestral works than as operatic ones, reminding him that Wagner had hoped in 1877 never to have his works performed in a concert hall again. When the London Wagner Society proposed that the operas be given only in German, Shaw responded that "true Wagnerism is to sing the Meister's works always in a tongue understood [*sic*] of the people."<sup>8</sup> Of the public at large Shaw asked support for an English Wagner theatre to be used for the production of new operas as well as old. Finally, he arrived at a position which once might have been Davison's: "We must have an English Wagner."<sup>9</sup>

These are but a few examples of Shaw's effort to continue the Wagnerian outlook into the musical world of his own day. We see that Shaw's relationship to the Wagner controversy was not one of explaining the Meister's theories, as Dannreuther's had been. Shaw's effort was to adopt the Wagnerian spirit, insofar as it was revolutionary and Socialistic, as his own for critical use. In several ways, however, Shaw was unable to accept Wagner's point of view. These areas are immediately obvious if we look at his analysis of *The Niblung's Ring* in *The Perfect Wagnerite*.

Shaw sees *The Ring* as a Socialist-anarchist allegory based upon Wagner's convictions during the period of the Dresden uprising. Because the poem of *The Ring* was published in 1853, only a few years

<sup>7</sup> *London Music* (London, 1937), p. 293.

<sup>8</sup> *The World*, June 24, 1891. Reprinted in *Music in London*.

<sup>9</sup> *The Star*, May 2, 1890. Reprinted in *London Music*.



after the Dresden affair, Shaw argues that Siegfried is the dramatic counterpart of Wagner's friend, the Russian anarchist, Michael Bakunin. Through the events of the operas, Shaw shows how "Siegfried-Bakoonin" systematically throws off the traditions of the past, finally destroying the corrupt world power that holds men in bondage. At the climax of this movement Siegfried shatters Wotan's spear, the symbol of compromised and hypocritical authority. Having removed this last obstacle, he enters the ring of fire, which Shaw compares to the mythical fire of hell, thus giving the lie to old-fashioned threats of damnation. The Rhinegold symbolizes the wealth for which men are subjugated so that their masters can live, like Alberich, richly and well.

Shaw carefully documents his case for *The Ring* by references to Wagner's life during the period 1848-49. The evidence of Wagner's political convictions at that time is incontrovertible. Wagner's autobiography, published thirteen years after *The Perfect Wagnerite*, substantiates Shaw's picture of the young composer in every detail. Indeed, had *The Ring* ended with *Siegfried*, it would be difficult to refute Shaw's idea that through this portrayal of the triumph of anarchy, Wagner was in fact writing a revolutionary polemic. As it is, Shaw finds that the fourth opera, *The Twilight of the Gods*, transforms Siegfried from the "free willer of necessity" into an ordinary person motivated by love; not a pure Shelleyan love, but "vehement sexual passion." So far has the drama disintegrated that he concludes, "There is no dramatic logic whatever in the recurrence of this theme to express the transport in which Brynhild immolates herself."<sup>10</sup>

It is curious that the very point at which Shaw boggles is the one most typical of Wagner's operas as a whole, and the one which his interpreters generally find easiest to accept.<sup>11</sup> The search for redemption through love is the motivating force behind many of Wagner's stories. Senta redeems the Dutchman through love and loyalty to him. Tannhäuser is forgiven his Venusberg idyll because of the patient, loving devotion of Elizabeth. The noble devotion of Tristan and Isolde transcends life itself.

Probably no concept is so consistently attacked as this one in the early works of Shaw. As early as *Love among the Artists* (1881) Shaw conceived a plot with romantic implications, only to dash the reader's hopes with the lesson that the creative spirit willingly foregoes love's insubstantial pleasures. His hero, the composer Owen Jack, passes by two offers of marriage; he is always single but never lonely. Thirteen years later Shaw reiterated this point with respect to *Candida*, exclaiming, "What business has a man with the great destiny of a poet with the small beer of domestic comfort and cuddling and petting at the apron-strings of some dear nice woman?"<sup>12</sup> In *The Devil's Disciple* (1896) and *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1911) he specifically repudiates the supposed virtues of the romantic passion. His rational and individualistic principle is altogether incompatible with Wagner's theory that

It is only in the union of man and woman by love (sensuous or super-sensuous) that the human being exists; and as the human being cannot

<sup>10</sup> *The Perfect Wagnerite* (New York, 1930), p. 248.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Ernest Newman, *The Wagner Operas* (New York, 1956).

<sup>12</sup> Archibald Henderson, *George Bernard Shaw—Man of the Century* (New York, 1956), p. 545.

rise to the conception of anything higher than his own existence — his own being — so the transcendent act of life is this consummation of humanity through love.<sup>13</sup>

It seems clear, therefore, that one cannot speak of Shaw as a "perfect Wagnerite" without some qualification. Sensitive to Wagner's faults, Shaw could not overlook the fact that in his later years Wagner was a decided political conservative, a grateful recipient of the patronage of Ludwig of Bavaria, and a solid supporter of Bismarck's rise in 1871. Thus in *Man and Superman* (1905) Shaw simply sends this aged gentleman to hell. "Wagner once drifted into Life Force worship and invented a Superman called Siegfried," the Devil tells us. "But he came to his senses afterwards," and so remains below in the land of romantic illusion.<sup>14</sup>

In the years following 1898 Shaw added chapters to *The Perfect Wagnerite* which show his willingness to account for Wagner's change of heart in *The Ring*. In the 1907 revision of *The Sanity of Art* (1895) he continued to praise Wagner's revolutionary spirit in music. But the virtues of Wagner's youth are what always attracted Shaw, as we see from later references in the prefaces to *Androcles and the Lion* (1916) and *Saint Joan* (1924). Perhaps his greatest tribute to the young composer after *The Perfect Wagnerite* is his paraphrase of *An End in Paris* (1841) in the death scene of *The Doctor's Dilemma*.

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#### FROM THE SHAVIAN PAST VIII

Upon his first coming to London, Mr. Bernard Shaw wrote a pamphlet called *Why I Am an Anarchist*. This was, I think, printed at The Torch press. At any rate, the young proprietors of that organ came into possession of a large number of copies of the pamphlet. I have twice seen Mr. Shaw unmanned — three times if I include an occasion upon a railway platform when a locomotive outvoiced him. One of the other occasions was when Mr. Shaw, having advanced a stage further toward his intellectual salvation, was addressing in the Park a socialist gathering on the tiresome text of the "Foolishness of Anarchism." The young proprietors of The Torch walked round and round in the outskirts of the crowd offering copies of Mr. Shaw's earlier pamphlet for sale, and exclaiming at the top of their voices, "Why I Am an Anarchist! By the lecturer!"

— Ford Madox Ford,  
in *Memories and Impressions* (1911).

<sup>13</sup> *The Perfect Wagnerite*, p. 264.

<sup>14</sup> *Man and Superman* (Baltimore, 1955), p. 174.



## An Early Shaw Article on Actors

by Drew B. Pallette<sup>1</sup>

The great debt that young Shaw owed to William Archer has been happily pointed out recently.<sup>2</sup> When he met Archer in 1884, Shaw had experienced seven years of frustration trying to break into journalism, after only a very brief period in 1876-77 of ghost-writing Lee's criticism for *The Hornet* (scarcely a foothold one would be proud of). Archer began using one device after another to get Shaw positions as a critic, sometimes taking a job himself and then having Shaw appointed his substitute. By this means he had Shaw made substitute music critic for *The Dramatic Review* by its second issue, February 8, 1885. He got Shaw work writing book reviews for *The Pall Mall Gazette*, beginning in May. With this start, Shaw began reviewing art and music for other journals, so that by the year's end he had earned £ 117.<sup>3</sup> Archer shortly obtained for him the position of art critic for *The World* which led to his writing on art and music during the next few years.

Shaw, then, was holding one of his first positions, as music critic on *The Dramatic Review*, when on September 19, 1885, that journal published an article over his scrawled, printed signature — not on music but on acting.<sup>4</sup> Entitled "Qualifications of the Complete Actor," it was written by Shaw nine years before he became a regular theatrical critic for *The Saturday Review*, and predates any similar attempt signed by him that has been recognized. Interesting though this makes it, the article has remained unknown to most Shaw investigators, and apparently has not been listed in any checklist of his writing, including E. J. West's in *The Shavian*. Fortunately, Laurence, I understand, intends to include it in his forthcoming microprint edition of Shaw's work. The circumstances under which it was written, however, throw light upon some of its contents.

If one undertakes to go through much of the London journalism of the 1880's, he may be astonished at the amount of space devoted to the theatre in even serious magazines, and in the daily press. Much of this discussion, which grew to rather overwhelming proportions by the last years of the decade, agitated for a "rebirth" of the drama, leading in a few years to the renaissance of the nineties. Beginning with Matthew Arnold's famous appeal in 1879 to organize the London stage, however, there was a good deal of confusion over whether the theatre that had once claimed Shakespeare would be saved by writing better plays, or by improving current acting. As the stage became a subject of fascination to an increasing number of genteel amateurs, discussion turned at times to the actor's technique.<sup>5</sup> A debate was stimulated by the publication in 1883 of a translation of Diderot's

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<sup>2</sup> Dan Lawrence, "Genesis of a Dramatic Critic," *The Shavian*, No. 16 (October, 1959), 15-20; also in *Modern Drama*, II (September, 1959), 178-83.

<sup>3</sup> St. John Ervine, *Bernard Shaw* (New York, 1956), p. 184.

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 64-65.

<sup>5</sup> See my article, "The English Actor's Fight for Respectability," *Theatre Annual*, VII (1948-49), 27-34, for various aspects of the highly-emotional controversy over actors and acting.

*Paradox of Acting* over whether an actor should develop his role through spontaneous emotional inspiration or through preconceived, calculated technique. The controversy that arose soon left Diderot. It began to appear in even important non-theatrical magazines as Irving and Coquelin took it up, respectively defending and attacking inspiration and, incidentally, attacking each other's methods.<sup>6</sup> Eventually the analytical Archer sent out a questionnaire to the members of the profession asking questions that might throw light on the subject, and published the results in a series of articles in *Longman's* in 1888, later reorganizing the material into a book, *Masks or Faces?*

It was in the midst of this talk, then, that Shaw took time off from his music criticism for *The Dramatic Review* to write his article for it on acting. While he did so probably to help keep the pot boiling, the current uproar may explain both his subject and his satiric tone. Immediately preceding a review of a Drury Lane melodrama (in which the critic scorns the need there for good acting), Shaw's article runs to about 1700 words. It opens with the statement that every week since *The Dramatic Review* started, the editor has received a letter from some aspirant to the stage asking how he should qualify for it. If the editor were a private individual, Shaw comments sardonically, he might reply that the only indispensable qualification is cheek. "When an audience has been lured past the checktaker, it will stand quite as much incompetence as the stupidest novice can find any satisfaction in displaying." The amateur need not worry about being hissed. "In England at least he will have to stir the nation very deeply before it will buy eggs or burden itself with heavy bottles and clammy cats on his account. Consequently . . . failure is purely negative: to fail is only not to succeed." In other words, the problem is not "to get before the public," but "to get the public before you . . ."

Unlike a public speaker who can practice his whole art every time he speaks, the novice actor learns only a small bit of his with every part he plays, and consequently it is very difficult for him to become fully qualified. A fully qualified actor "knows the visible symptoms of every human condition, and has such perfect command of his motor powers that he can reproduce with his own person all the movements which constitute such symptoms." Apparently a follower of the preconceived, calculated effect school, Shaw tells the bewildered novice to read "Sir Charles Bell, Herbert Spencer, Francis Galton, Francis Warner, and above all Charles Darwin":

. . . From them he can also learn whatever has so far been ascertained as to the postures, changes of colour, and visible actions which invariably accompany the working of any emotion or the existence of any mental or bodily condition in man. . . . He will find, for instance, that Hamlet's normal attitude, as exhibited during his presence on the stage for the short time which elapses before he takes any part in the business of the play, depends, not on the actor's taste, but on his opinion of Hamlet's constitution and state of health.

Shaw then tells the novice to learn "all the modern languages — especially German — and to read the proceedings of scientific societies,

<sup>6</sup> C. Coquelin, "Acting and Actors," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, LXXIV (May, 1887), 891-909; Henry Irving, "An Actor's Notes, No. 4," *Nineteenth Century*, XXI (June, 1887), 800-03. Irving had attacked Diderot's theory in his preface to the 1883 translation. The quarrel was conducted in *The Dramatic Review*, especially by Leonard Outram and Paul Hookham beginning on August 21, 1886 and running to the following January 15.

the physiological journals, &c., both English and foreign, with the utmost care and regularity."

Finally, the novice must learn muscle control through "gymnastic training so thorough as not to leave a single muscle in his body involuntary." He should know wrestling, the arts and sciences, the points of religious ritual, political economy, and statistics.

On points as to which there is no recorded testimony, personal experience alone can help him to attain to scientific truth of representation. If a reprieve at the last moment can possibly be arranged, he should commit a murder — or even several, on persons differing in sex, age, and degree of relationship to himself — and get condemned to death. Burglary and forgery are experiences which no actor should be without. But study of this kind may easily be overdone. It is useless to commit outrages that are never represented on the stage, such as assaults on bishops. . . .

Shaw may have been drawn to theatrical criticism as much by the great amount of space being devoted to it, and the opportunities this afforded, as by Archer's influence. The implications in this early *Dramatic Review* article show how closely he was following the current controversy over the drama and acting. The article is scarcely a major one, and he carries the burlesque to a point that may now seem a bit silly. But when one considers to what a ridiculous extent the discussion was at times being carried, he may understand.

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BERNARD SHAW — TEN YEARS AFTER (1950—1960) was the subject of discussion at a conference of Scholars, held as part of the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association of America, on Dec. 29, 1960. A summary of the proceedings will appear in the May, 1961 issue of *The Shaw Review*.

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<sup>7</sup> "The Anatomy of Acting," *Longman's*, XI (January-March, 1888), 266-81, 375-95, 498-516. Archer asked such questions as, "In moving situations, do tears come to your eyes?" or "Has the memory of a bygone emotion . . . in your personal life influenced your acting in a similar situation?" (pp. 268-69).

# Clothes Make the Man

by John J. Weisert<sup>1</sup>

Jaegerism now means little to the average reader except as some of its effects are preserved in such memorable descriptions as that of Shaw "looking like a damaged brown-paper parcel."<sup>2</sup> Even the dramatist's knowledgeable biographer St. John Ervine writes with puzzlement that his subject abandoned the use of sheets on his bed, "though what complaint he could bring against linen is hard to understand."<sup>3</sup> It is not difficult if we remembered that the Sanitary Woolen System embraced not only the clothes a man wore but also the bed he slept in, and that linen or cotton in any form was anathema to Dr. Jaeger. Similarly, R. F. Rattray's cryptic entry: "From the age of thirty Shaw had his socks made to fit right foot and left foot,"<sup>4</sup> makes the Irishman an extravagant crank, if we do not know that Dr. Jaeger designed, wore, and endorsed "a sock like a glove, with a separate receptacle for each toe."<sup>5</sup> Socks for the right and left foot or socks with divisions for one or five toes were standard merchandise in stores featuring Jaeger woollens.

Shaw once explained to Ellen Terry that his "much ridiculed Jaegerism" was "an attempt at cleanliness and porousness: I want my body to breathe . . . I always have the window wide open night and day; I shun cotton and linen and all fibrous fabrics that collect odors, as far as my person is concerned."<sup>6</sup> This was by way of elucidation, he having recommended some months before "lissome clothes (all wool)" for the infant grandchild of the actress.<sup>7</sup>

Here and elsewhere Shaw proselytized for a system of clothing thought out by a Swabian zoologist and introduced commercially on the continent and in England in 1880. Dr. Gustav Jaeger, one of Darwinism's most determined advocates in Germany, evolved in monthly essays beginning about 1872 an extremely simple rationale of human physiology and its accompanying "salutary" and "noxious" emanations. Years of thought, observation, and experimentation yielded these Doric rules: wear the Sanitary Woolen Clothing, sleep in and on wool, and keep the bedroom window open at night.<sup>8</sup>

The philosophy of society's would-be mentor in the matter of clothing and bedding was based on the maxim: "Procure and maintain the highest possible specific gravity."<sup>9</sup> This was done by preventing the deposit of fat and promoting the elimination of water from the tissues, for human flesh consisted of fat, water, and albumen, the last

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<sup>2</sup> William Archer, "The Three Dramatists," *Drama*, New Series, No. 42 (Autumn 1956), p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> St. John Ervine, *Bernard Shaw His Life, Works and Friends* (New York, 1956), p. 309.

<sup>4</sup> R. F. Rattray, *Bernard Shaw: A Chronicle* (New York, 1951), p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> Gustav Jaeger, *Selections from the Essays on Health Culture and the Sanitary Woolen System* (New York, 1891), p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw *A Correspondence*, ed. by Christopher St. John (New York, 1932), p. 205.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>8</sup> Jaeger, *Health Culture*, p. 111.

the vital substance. As the body was constantly in a process of decomposition, noxious emanations were given off partially through the pores of the skin. The skin could be kept at its optimum condition only by wearing next to it woolen material, conforming as closely to the body as possible, as this alone was approved by nature to cover warm-blooded animals. Wool, being permeable to moisture, facilitated the evaporation of water from the surface of the skin. Most dye stuffs impeded this process and were rejected, so only indigo-black, white, and the range of colors from gray to tan of the undyed wool were permissible. The reddish brown of camel's hair was the one alternative available to the devotee. This and wool were non-conductive to heat and electricity, thus conserving both for the body. By keeping the body's heat at constant temperature, the same clothing could be worn summer and winter. Cotton and linen, dead vegetable matter, had the property of absorbing the noxious exhalations from the body without the ability of the living plant to release them to the atmosphere in a harmless state. Hence they became a constant source of re-infection. Such things as suit-linings and shoulder padding which were never washed were deadly. By a natural extension, linen pillowcases and sheets came under the ban; somewhat less naturally, mattresses as they were generally made. Rigorously consistent, Dr. Jaeger banished even linen curtains from the windows of his study, as he deplored the rag content of some paper and searched for effective counter measures.<sup>10</sup>

On the basis of the fact that domestic animals live from five to six times as long as the time required to grow full size, Dr. Jaeger predicted for followers of his System a life span of ninety to one hundred years.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps of more interest to Shaw at the moment of his first introduction to Jaegerism was the doctor's testimony that on a visit to Dresden he spoke "with only one hour's interruption, incessantly from 2 P.M. to 4 A.M. At 9 A.M. I resumed discussion, my voice being quite unaffected until 6 P.M.; and again, in the train, from 2 to 7 in the early morning."<sup>12</sup> This and the more exacting schedule that follows it exceed even the Shavian loquacity.

Dr. Jaeger's excesses may be laughable, but continental literary figures like the Hauptmann brothers and Chekhov were impressed by his theories and sometimes followed his advice.<sup>13</sup> Shaw thought so highly of it that his first new suit in years, ordered on June 17, 1885, and bought with money from his father's estate, was of Jaeger woolen.<sup>14</sup> His enthusiasm persisted, albeit with Shavian reservations. Experimenting with the one-piece suit, for example, was not orthodox, for Dr. Jaeger, having worked arduously on the problem of the belt, had at last designed something which he found completely satisfactory. Dr. Jaeger also opined that strict vegetarianism was not obligatory, his original opposition changing to benevolent neutrality after observations in the Stuttgart zoo.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137, 152.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>13</sup> Gerhart Hauptmann, *Das Abenteuer meiner Jugend* (Berlin, 1937), II, 224. Anton Chekhov, *Selected Letters*. Ed. by Lillian Hellman. Trans. by Sidonie Lederer. New York, 1955, p. 321.

<sup>14</sup> Ervine, Bernard Shaw, p. 150.

<sup>15</sup> Jaeger, *Health Culture*, pp. 171, 183-190.



# A Continuing Check-list of Shaviana

compiled and edited by Charles A. Carpenter, Jr.<sup>1</sup>

## I. Works by Shaw

*Dear Liar; a Comedy of Letters*, adapted by Jerome Kilty from the correspondence of Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1960. The text of the Broadway production, which starred Brian Aherne and Katherine Cornell.

"The Drama's Laws" (excerpt), in Henry James, *Guy Domville; Play in Three Acts*, with comments by Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett (Philadelphia: Lippincott "Keystone Books," 1960). Reprinted from Shaw's discerning and appreciative article on the play in the *Saturday Review*, January 12, 1895.

*Dramatic Criticism*, 1895-98, a selection by John F. Matthews. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1960. The Hill and Wang "Dramabook" rebound in cloth.

"Hamlet," in Russell E. Leavenworth, ed., *Interpreting Hamlet; Materials for Analysis* (San Francisco: Howard Chandler, 1960), 65-71. Shaw's famous criticism of Forbes-Robertson's Hamlet, reprinted from the *Saturday Review*, October 2, 1897.

Letter, in "From the Mail Pouch: G.B.S.; Corno di Bassetto Has His Say on Pianos and Paderewski," *New York Times* (August 21, 1960), sec. II, p. 9. A long, previously unpublished letter (dated November 11, 1938) to Mary Lawton, co-author of *The Paderewski Memoirs*. Ralph E. Samuel recently acquired the ms.

Letter, in *The Private Diaries of Sydney Moseley* (London: Max Parrish, 1960), 313. A brief note written to A. J. Russell in 1931.

"Meredith on Comedy" (excerpt), in John J. Enck, Elizabeth T. Forter and Alvin Whitley, eds., *The Comic in Theory & Practice* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1960), 38-42. Shaw's distinctive remarks on comedy occasioned by the republication of Meredith's *Essay*. From the *Saturday Review*, March 27, 1897.

"The Miraculous Revenge," in Leo Hamalian and Edmond L. Volpe, eds., *Great Stories by Nobel Prize Winners* (New York: Noonday Press, 1959), 150-72. A short story first published in 1885, in which the hero, Zeno Legge, upsets a girl, a priest, and a miracle by his Shavian antics.

"The Rejected Statement," in Robert B. Downs, ed., *The First Freedom; Liberty and Justice in the World of Books and Reading* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1960), 253-65. Shaw's indictment of English censorship, first written (and rejected) as a statement of evidence for the use of an investigating committee in Parliament, later incorporated into his Preface to *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*.

*Sventoji Joana; pjeses* (by B. Sou). Goslitizdat Litovskoj SSR, 1960. *Saint Joan* in Lithuanian.

*Ten Short Plays*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1960. Features Shaw's last play, *Why She Would Not*, printed from the typescript at the University of Texas. The other nine, with prefaces where they exist, are *Shakes versus Shaw*, *The Six of Calais*, *Annajanska, the Bolshevik Empress*, *Augustus Does His Bit*, *The Inca of Perusalem*, *O'Flaherty V. C.*, *The Music-Cure*, *The Shewing-up of*

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Carpenter, *Shaw Review Bibliographer*, is Librarian of the Goldwin Smith Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. Readers, writers, and publishers are urged to call contemporary Shaviana to his attention.

*Blanco Posnet*, and *The Admirable Bashville*. Only the last of these ten is found in the Penguin *Seven One-Act Plays* issued in 1958.

## II. Shaviana — Books and Pamphlets

- Archer, William, *Play-Making; a Manual of Craftsmanship* (New York: Dover, 1960), viii-xv, 85-88 and *passim*. An unabridged paperback reprint of the classic-of-its-kind first published in 1912. This includes a new introduction by John Gassner which contrasts Shaw's organic with Archer's mechanical concept of the creative process, and justifies the unity of plays based on rhetorical principles such as *Getting Married*, which Archer had derogatively compared to *Oedipus Rex*.
- Ausubel, Herman, *In Hard Times: Reformers Among the Late Victorians* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960). Valuable for placing Shaw and other contemporary reformers in the perspective of each other's work and thought, and thus in the context of their times. See esp. Chapter X, pp. 146-62, as well as *passim*.
- Beerbohm, Max, *A Selection from Around Theatres* (New York: Doubleday "Anchor Books," 1960). Reprints eleven brief essays on Shaw, most of them reviews of productions.
- Behrman, Samuel N., *Portrait of Max; an Intimate Memoir of Sir Max Beerbohm* (New York: Random House, 1960), 21-31 and *passim*. Reviewed in this issue.
- Chappelow, Allan, ed., *Shaw the Villager and Human Being; a Symposium*, with a foreword by Dame Sybil Thorndike. London: Charles Skilton, 1960.
- Daiches, David, *A Critical History of English Literature* (New York: Ronald Press, 1960), II, 1104-08. A series of wide-ranging critical estimates rather than the usual play-by-play account. Shaw's comedies of ideas generally succeed insofar as they aim to "diagnose sham and release vitality," and they are undoubtedly entertaining, critical, and stimulating; "but all this comes from the sparkle of Shaw's mind, not from a fully realized dramatic projection of a complex vision of life."
- Gassner, John, *Theatre at the Crossroads* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), 197-201, 248-49. Revivals of *The Doctor's Dilemma* and *Saint Joan* indicate a growing tendency among actors and producers to "tame Shaw while favoring him, to domesticate or housebreak Shaw while adopting him." His satire and buoyancy are often toned down, and "we give him character creation instead, even when Shaw had other and (heresy!) more appropriate intentions."
- Hogan, Robert, *The Experiments of Sean O'Casey* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), 198-201. An account of the controversy over O'Casey's expressionist play, *The Silver Tassie*. Shaw, Yeats, and Lady Gregory argued for the fellow Irishman. To be reviewed in the next issue.
- Lawson, John Howard, *Theory and Technique of Playwriting* (New York, Hill and Wang "Dramabooks," 1960), 107-113 and *passim*. A new edition of the famous study of playwriting, which develops its point of view from Shaw's description of the theatre's classic function: "The theatre is a factor of thought, a prompter of conscience, an elucidator of social conduct, an armory against despair and darkness, and a temple of the ascent of man."
- Martz, Louis L., "The Saint as Tragic Hero; *Saint Joan* and *Murder in the Cathedral*," in Cleanth Brooks, ed., *Tragic Themes in Western Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press Paperbound, 1960), 150-78. A paperback reprint of the book which first appeared in 1955.
- Mosley, Oswald, "Wagner and Shaw." London: Sanctuary Press, 1960. A reprint in pamphlet form of an article from *The European*.

- Nathan, George Jean, *The Magic Mirror; Selected Writings on the Theatre*, ed. by Thomas Q. Curtiss (New York: Knopf, 1960), 155-77. Four essays on Shaw are reprinted: on *Saint Joan* ("It thinks when we would feel; it is literal when we would soar into the clouds of fancy"); on Shaw's dislike and evasion of sex; on *Too True to Be Good* ("dull, dull, dull"); and on Shaw's overall achievement as a reforming, but still basically romantic, dramatic artist.
- Nethercot, Arthur H., *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). Reviewed in the last issue.
- Weales, Gerald, "The Edwardian Theatre and the Shadow of Shaw," in Richard Ellmann, ed., *Edwardians and Late Victorians*, "English Institute Essays, 1959" [and 1958] (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960). Reviewed in this issue.
- Wilson, John Dover, "Memories of Harley Granville-Barker and Two of His Friends," in *Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies Presented to Frank Percy Wilson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 327-37. The general editor of the New Cambridge Shakespeare recalls Granville-Barker, Barrie, and Shaw. "With all his genius [Shaw] was not quite human; that's why he never understood Shakespeare."

### III. Shaviana — Periodicals

- Bullough, Geoffrey, "Bernard Shaw, the Dramatist: a Centenary Tribute," *Cairo Studies in English* (1959).
- The California Shavian*, I (no. 6, September-October, 1960). Issued by the Shaw Society of California. Includes "Shaw's Sparkling Wit Fascinates Notable Gathering" by Louella Parsons, an impression of Shaw at 77 (reprinted from the *Los Angeles Examiner*, March 27 [?], 1933; the Shaw letter on Paderewski (see above); etc.
- Cockerell, Sydney, "Shavian," *Times Literary Supplement*, LIX (July 29, 1960), 481. A letter to the editor on how the term originated. Reprinted in the latest *Shavian*.
- Dunlap, Joseph R., "The Typographical Shaw: GBS and the Revival of Printing," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, LXIV (October, 1960), 534-47. By having his works printed in accord with William Morris's principles of artistic and functional book design, Shaw contributed directly to the "Revival of Printing." Dunlap traces Shaw's progress in this respect up to the 1930s.
- Edwards, William A., "George Bernard Shaw oder die Psychologie des Ketzers," *Blätter des Schauspielhauses Bochum*, II (1959).
- Keough, Lawrence C., "George Bernard Shaw, 1946-1955: a Bibliography; Part III," *Bulletin of Bibliography*, XXIII (May-August, 1960), 36-41. This concludes Keough's impressive list.
- King, Seth S., "Max Beerbohm's Private Fun," *The New York Times Magazine* (December 11, 1960), 46-47. In illustration and text, a look at the late Sir Max's fake literary association copies, including an "improved" Henderson Shaw.
- Kupferberg, Herbert, "G.B.S. a Decade Later," *New York Herald Tribune* (November 2, 1960). "The remarkable thing is not how much of Shaw seems faded and futile, but how much of it is apposite and alive."
- "Letters of English Authors from the Collection of Robert H. Taylor," *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, XXI (Summer, 1960), 200-36. A catalog of an exhibition. Items 123-25 and 134 pertain to Shaw and include excerpts from the letters; e.g. Shaw wrote to Henry Salt that *Man and Superman* "is one of the most colossal efforts of the human mind."
- McDowell, Frederick P. W., "Spiritual and Political Reality: Shaw's *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*," *Modern Drama*, III (September, 1960), 196-



210. Discusses the play as a farcical and allegorical structure of meanings, most of them paradoxes about the unpredictable nature of life. Act II is described as an "imaginative toying with the idea of a last judgment in which the wages of social indifference is death."

Mayne, Fred, "Consonance and Consequence," *English Studies in Africa*, II (March, 1959), 59-72. Shaw's dramatic prose style achieves a "rhetorical inevitability" which must partly be attributed to devices of rhythm and sound. Mayne casts a suggestive glance at such devices, and at others which are discernable behind the facade of artlessness.

Mehus, Donald V., "Mut zur Subjektivität; Bernard Shaw als Musikkritiker," *Merkur* (Köln), XIV, no. 12 (1959), 7.

*The Regional*, III (nos. 2, 3: August, December, 1960). Issued by the New York Regional Group of The Shaw Society (London). No. 2 includes news, facetiae, etc. No. 3 includes "Shot as Human Vermin," Shaw's diatribe on the historical development of capitalism (reprinted from *Wiltshire's Magazine*, June, 1902); etc.

Schirmer, Walter F., "Und immer wieder *Candida*," *Bühnen der Stadt Köln*, Programmh. I (1958/59).

*The Shavian*, II (September, 1960). The journal of The Shaw Society (London). Includes "Where Darwin Is Taboo; the Bible in America," Shaw's blast of the Scopes monkey trial (reprinted from the *New Leader*, July 10, 1925); "GBS: Mosleyite?" by Richard Nickson (a rejoinder to Geoffrey Allen's remark that Shaw flirted with Fascism and Mosleyism); "John Bull's Other Islander" by John S. Collis (memoirs, with a Shaw postcard); etc.

Slonim, Marc, "Four Western Writers on Tolstoy," *Russian Review*, XIX (April, 1960), 187-204. In contrast to Chesterton, Shaw was "mainly interested in Tolstoy's role as a crusader against contemporary ills." Thus "he extolled those very tales . . . in which a Chesterton had seen only dull moralizing."

Smith, J. Percy, "G.B.S. on the Theatre," *Tamarack Review*, no. 15 (Spring 1960), 73-86. To Shaw, the theatre was a temple and its workers a priesthood. Plays must reveal moral purpose and courage as well as craftsmanship, and must deal with life truthfully. These principles deserve the respect of critics, even though the terms in which they are expressed (e.g., "truth") raise as many questions as they settle.

Stambusky, A. A., "Bernard Shaw's Farcical Vision: Comic Perspective in the Traditional Mode," *Drama Critique*, III (May, 1960), 82-87.

Viola, Wilhelm, "Neues über Shaw," *Bühnen der Stadt Köln*, Programmh. II (1959).

Weintraub, Stanley, "Apostate Apostle: H. L. Mencken as Shavophile and Shavophobe," *Educational Theatre Journal*, XII (October, 1960), 184-90. After the Shavolatry of his 1905 book, Mencken came to consider Shaw's ideas as mere "super-platitudes" designed to rout lesser platitudes. Supplanting Shaw as chief public iconoclast (and misunderstanding Creative Evolution), Mencken promoted, more than any other American critic, "the popular notion of Shaw as a self-advertising clown and coiner of cheap paradoxes."

Weintraub, Stanley, "Bernard Shaw, Actor," *Theatre Arts*, XLIV (October, 1960), 66-67. Details of Shaw's miniscule career as an actor.

#### IV. Shaviana — Dissertations

Since these items are not examined by the bibliographer, reference is given to the abstracts found in Dissertation Abstracts (DA).

Goldstone, Richard Henry, "The Pariah in Modern American and British Literature: an Illustration of a Method for Teachers of Literature," *DA*, XXI (October, 1960), 893 (Columbia University). *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is one of many works discussed.

The Edwardians are more fashionable than ever in the publishing world. Once condescended to as unworthy of serious treatment, the Edwardian era has recently been dignified by the latest *English Institute Essays*, the publication of the Wells-Bennett correspondence, and a memoir of Max Beerbohm, its epitome.<sup>1</sup>

In *Edwardians and Late Victorians* (the 1959 *Essays*), scholarship and reappraisal ranges from the inevitable studies of Yeats and reassessments of the decades 1890-1900 and 1900-1910 to analyses of George Moore, the central novels of H. G. Wells, and the Shaw-dominated Edwardian theatre. Richard Ellman, quoting Yeats's remark that after 1900 people did none of the violent things they had done in the nineties, asks, "Can we detect in this period, so distinguished in many ways, its writers so strict with themselves and with us, a sensible loss of vigor and heat?" In Gordon Ray's "H. G. Wells Tries to Be a Novelist," we see such a tendency during Wells's "most productive and interesting period of his career" (1895-1910), when he "defined for himself an ideal of the novel to which he gave embodiment in four fine books, *Love and Mr. Lewisham* (1900), *Kipps* (1905), *Tono-Bungay* (1909), and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910)." Wells contended that the Gissingesque novel of harsh greyness was not really representative of life, not even of the life of the lower middle class who worked for wages. Instead of despairing and decrying, he insisted (and exemplified in his Edwardian novels) that the modern novel should be "exhilarating." But his ambition to anatomize the new social order led him less and less into the novel as arts and more and more into the novel of prophecy and propaganda, his substantial fiction petering out in the "careless" novels *Ann Veronica* (1909) and *The New Machiavelli* (1911), attacks, respectively, on conventional sexual morality and on the Fabians of the Webb-Shaw group who suppressed his attempt to redesign the aims of the Fabian society.

Gerald Weales's essay, "The Edwardian Theatre and the Shadow of Shaw," makes its major point clear in the title — the Shavian dominance of the English dramatic scene in the century's first decade. "There are three primary identification marks of this Edwardian drama," Weales writes: "(1) its sense of expectation which has become, for us, a fact of achievement; (2) its faith in the theatre as an institution that might transcend its box office; and (3) its acceptance of an implied exchange of ideas between the theater and the social, political, and psychological world in which it made its way. All three of these are . . . the marks of George Bernard Shaw, the shadow that he threw on his contemporaries." Shaw was so the theatrical colossus of his era, Weales adds, that the effect on playwriting was not a com-

<sup>1</sup> Richard Ellmann, ed., *Edwardians and Late Victorians*. *English Institute Essays*, 1959. New York, Columbia University Press, 1960. 245 pp., \$500. Harris Wilson, ed., *Arnold Bennett & H. G. Wells*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1960. 290 pp., \$3.50. S. N. Behrman, *Portrait of Max*, New York, Random House, 1960. 317 pp., \$6.00.

pletely happy one: "That Shavian shadow that fell across Edwardian drama was a shadow in more ways than one. It not only marked the plays of the period by coloring the playwrights with Shaw's idea of the theater, it ended by obscuring the other dramatists almost completely."

Since "ordinary playwrights, even good ones, look insignificant alongside giants," Weales takes the stand that among the near-forgotten Edwardian writers for the stage, one particularly deserves "re-awakened interest" — Harley Granville Barker. This he does by a twenty-page effort in "dislodging Barker from the Shavian context and considering him as a dramatist in his own right." No serious playwright of the era escapes the influence of Shaw, he concludes, but Barker's "obvious merits" [as well as Barker himself] suffered most from "too close an identification with the older playwright."

Max Beerbohm, praising *The Madras House* at the expense of *Misalliance*, once wrote, "I ought, in decency, not to forget how much Mr. Barker owes to Mr. Shaw. He was not, of course, created by Mr. Shaw; but deeply influenced he was and is. I hope he will now repay the debt by influencing Mr. Shaw. Then I shall be happy as the day is long." Not all Shavians cherish this "incomparable Max," epitome of Edwardians, to whom G.B.S. turned over his *Saturday Review* seat on the aisle. The views of Shaw and Beerbohm on almost every conceivable subject in and out of the arts were poles apart, yet each had a reluctant admiration for the other. It is that which makes S. N. Behrman's *Portrait of Max* (*Conversation with Max* in the English edition) a new perspective upon their relationship, for though Max in conversation predictably proves as witty and appealing as Max in print, on the subject of G.B.S. he is privately more mordant.

Even the most devoted Maximilians own that no one else in modern letters has managed to carve out so large a reputation for himself from such fragile, such restricted talent. Though Max died as recently as 1956, he was an anachronism after the First World War. His most fruitful period — from his taking Shaw's place in theatre criticism until the publication of his only extended creative work, *Zuleika Dobson* (1911) — barely overlaps each end of the brief, bright era we label *Edwardian*. Mr. Behrman's unorthodox memoir of Max — here enhanced by handsome bookmaking — appears almost unchanged from its seven-part run in *The New Yorker* early in 1960. Though designed as a series of reminiscences of conversations with its subject during the last four years of his long life (1872-1956), the design is deceptive. Not only do some of the "conversations" appear to depend heavily upon private letters to friends, but the volume *in toto* is also an informal biography, as well as a sampling of other men's memoirs of Max, and of Max's ever-charming caricatures and published writings. In all its guises, however, it becomes as much a portrait of an era as a portrait of Max.

Many of Max's anecdotes about Shaw will make Shavolators wince. One describes how Shaw, after inviting Beerbohm, Barrie and others to lunch with Mark Twain, "At the end of a very agreeable lunch, . . . jumped up, said he had an appointment with his dentist,

and rushed off, leaving us alone with his guest. It was somewhat embarrassing . . . " G.B.S. was "a cold man," and a "coarse man," Max thought, though he was always, Max hastened to add, kind and utterly unvindictive. "G.B.S. had a sense of beauty," we find Max saying at one point — and at another that Shaw's playwriting had "no light and shade, no poetry" and was "the straight jacket of panacea." Yet G.B.S. had a few stancher champions among the Edwardian theater critics. Max recognized Shavian drama as a breed apart from the commercial drama "brewed of skimmed milk and stale water," and realized that once Shaw's plays had sufficient exposure before the public, even the commercial managers would seek out his work. Shaw's feet were on the ground and his touch with the crowd, Max insisted. Not so with the ever-urbane Max, who tried (much of the time with success) to achieve in his work as his life an outwardly serene detachment from his increasingly troubled times.

Far from detached in attitude were Max's famous contemporaries, Arnold Bennett (whose *Old Wives' Tale* he later thought the finest English novel thus far in the century) and H. G. Wells, whose correspondence with each other has been edited from the Wells Archive<sup>2</sup> at the University of Illinois Library by Harris Wilson. The many personal commitments each had notwithstanding, the Wells-Bennett personal letters deal largely with each other's work and views on the art of fiction, beginning in 1897, when Wells was a rising author and Bennett an obscure young editor. Interest rises as each pursues his star, while urging the claims of his literary values upon the other. And interest declines as, with the close of the Edwardian era, both men reach their zenith in fiction and begin the slow decline. Bennett's return from nearly a decade in France contributes to the lessening of importance in the content of the letters, for the friends became more physically accessible to each other.

During the productive Edwardian years, it is interesting to see how the theater regularly tempts Bennett, but is resisted by Wells, who once abortively agrees to give his friend "seven clear days of honest collaboration" on a play. The major fascination of the exchange, however, lies not in revelations of new facts or the rare comments (some savagely frank) about such contemporaries as Conrad and George Moore. Considering that each knew the literary vanity of the other, and had to be politely effusive about some of the other's work he knew to be inferior, there are many passages in which each writer sincerely and acutely gets down to the other's weaknesses. Wells, for example, tells Bennett that his work leaves the impression of "a photograph a little under-developed," and complains that Bennett accepts all the surface values he (Wells) rejects. "Cut your channel deeper," he advises. Bennett, on the other hand, tells Wells, "You are simply a passion for justice incarnate. You aren't an artist, except insofar as you disdainfully make use of your art for reforming ends . . . You are not really interested in individual humanity . . . You are concerned in big crowd-movements. Art, really, you hate. It means to you what 'arty' means to me." One is reminded of a dinner party conversation at Sir Philip Sassoon's, related in *Portrait of Max*. "I found myself sit-

<sup>2</sup> From which succeeding volumes of correspondence between Wells and Shaw, and between Wells and Gissing, are in preparation.

ting next to Mrs. Shaw," Max recalls. "G.B.S. was a safe distance down the table . . . . After spraying G.B.S. with every variety of praise, I murmured, 'But you know, Charlotte, G.B.S. has no aesthetic sense. He is not an artist.' She leapt at this! She said that she was always telling G.B.S. that. She said that what he *really* was was a reformer."

— Stanley Weintraub

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## *The Play's The Thing*

In *The Magic Curtain* Mr. Langner wrote of his experience with most of the great playwrights of our day. In *The Play's the Thing*<sup>1</sup> he writes a book of advice for young, unknown, unproduced writers.

The writer who has established no connection with the professional theatre can find a lot of what he needs to know in this textbook. Mr. Langner, from his years of experience as a producer, knows the audience as well as he knows the writer. He knows that the audience must be kept interested in the play; and how the playwright works to accomplish this, in his first work on the play, and then during rehearsals and during pre-Broadway tours, is the subject of a large part of the book.

The novice who finally has a script accepted can enter into the rehearsal period with some aplomb after reading the chapter "The Playwright's Role in Production." I know of no other book that describes these rights and responsibilities.

Mr. Langner offers some hope, and gives some advice, to writers for television.

There are a number of brief anecdotal and illustrative references to Bernard Shaw.

— Nadine Miles<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Langner, *The Play's the Thing* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), 258 pp., \$4.00.

<sup>2</sup> Miss Miles is Professor of Dramatic Arts at Western Reserve University.



## News and Queries

SHAW SOCIETY OF AMERICA presentations opening the 1960-61 season accented New York theatrical personalities. Warren Caro, Executive Director of The Theatre Guild — American Theatre Society spoke on "G.B.S. and the Theatre Guild" on October 20 at the Grolier Club. The December 4 meeting presented a concert reading of the first part of *Back to Methuselah*, *In the Beginning*, directed by Philip Minor, with Carol Gustafson, Frances Sternhagen, Tom Carlin and John Heldabrand, as (respectively) the Serpent, Eve, Cain and Adam. A directorial addition to the conventional two acts was the use of the cycle-concluding sililoquy of Lilith (spoken by Miss Gustafson) to close the reading.

THE SHAW SOCIETY OF CALIFORNIA, meeting regularly in Los Angeles, presented a program of extraordinary interest on No. 27, 1960: "The Recent [Presidential] Election as Analyzed by Bernard Shaw." The perspective the discussants used was Shaw's *The Apple Cart*. Moderator was Charles Meredith, Secretary of the Shaw Society of California. Panelists were Georgiana Hardy, of the Los Angeles Board of Education, Judge Alfred Gitelson of the California Superior Court, ExGovernor Goodwin J. Knight and State Assemblyman Jesse M. Unruh.

THE SHAW SOCIETY OF CHICAGO, in locations ranging from its new regular meeting place, the "Happy Medium" theatre club, to St. Chrysostom's Church, presented fall concert readings of *Blanco Posnet*, *Overruled*, *Androcles and the Lion* and *Saint Joan*. Scheduled for early 1961 were *Fanny's First Play*, *Getting Married* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.

## Queries

In Joseph McCabe's *George Bernard Shaw* (New York, 1914) there appears on page 254 a provocative allusion to Mrs. Charlotte Shaw, "whose character is delineated with great charm and admiration, for those who are aware of it, in a well-known recent novel." Does any reader know the author and title of the novel, and the character allegedly based on Mrs. Shaw?

(The Rev.) Alexander Seabrook  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Farrell, Pennsylvania

I am working on a book on the *ideas* in Shaw's plays — *An Interpretation of Shaw* — and would welcome correspondence with scholars working on this approach to the plays.

Jack R. Brown  
Marshall College  
Huntington, West Virginia



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## OBJECT

To study and interpret George Bernard Shaw's writings, work, and personality; to make him more widely understood and appreciated; and to provide a meeting ground for those who admire and respect the man.

## HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER

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